

Terms of Reference for End-of-the-Project Evaluation

Enabling a Political Economy Discourse for Multi-modal Connectivity in the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) Sub-region (M-Connect Project)

1. About the M-Connect Project

1.1 The M-Connect project started in January 2020 is reaching its end in December 2022. It is in this context that a holistic end-of-project evaluation is planned to analyse and evaluate its impact and achievements.

Details of the M-Connect Project

Implementing Agency: CUTS International

Partner Agencies: Unnayan Shamannay (Bangladesh), Bodhi Media and Communications Institute (Bhutan), and Nepal Economic Forum (Nepal)

Supporting Agencies: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom as Financial Partner and Asian Development Bank (ADB) as Knowledge Partner.

Duration of the Project: January 2020 - December 2022

Background and Context: South Asia is one of the least integrated and connected regions in the world. However, of late, political will for infrastructure and regulatory coherence for seamless connectivity, across standalone as well as inter-operable infrastructural nodes, is particularly anchored through the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) group of countries. There is a growing realisation that a more integrated BBIN sub-region is imperative for regional growth and development, leading to peace, security, stability and prosperity.

In recent periods, discourse for a seamlessly connected BBIN sub-region is getting increasing traction for greater intra and inter-regional connectivity and trade in South Asia and also with Southeast Asia.

The signing of the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) in June 2015 was one major step towards sub-regional connectivity. The BBIN MVA will allow the member states to ply their vehicles in each other's territory for transportation of cargo and passengers. But this agreement, which will make the logistics sector in the sub-region more competitive by reducing the time and cost of doing cross-border trade is still to be implemented.

Regional transport integration initiatives, including augmentation of existing and emerging inter-modal transport infrastructure, are important for the seamless and resilient flow of goods, people and ideas. Given the current state of affairs with regard to intra-regional trade and connectivity, there is a huge scope, and potential. Sub-regional trade can significantly increase. At the same time, there could also be some losers from the implementation of such initiatives.

For realising potential benefits, there is need for addressing possible losses emerging from implementation of these initiatives. Further, strong political intent including for the implementation of the BBIN MVA, can result in quick implementation of the connectivity initiatives.

While political intent is critical, connectivity efforts of multi-modal dimensions in the sub-region require clear understanding of- ground level challenges to physical and digital infrastructure, policy and regulatory coherence.

In this context, since January 2020, CUTS International, with support from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is implementing the project entitled 'Enabling a Political Economy Discourse for Multi-modal Connectivity in the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Sub-region (M-Connect)' in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh, Bodhi Media and Communications Institute, Bhutan and Nepal Economic Forum. The Asian Development Bank is a knowledge partner.

CUTS and its partners have identified four critical transport corridors in the BBIN sub-region and conducted primary and secondary research in more than 50 strategic locations as part of the project. A number of research outputs have been published and several webinars organised over this period to further the project goals and objectives. These research works provide critical information on the current status of infrastructure and connectivity in the four corridors, existing infrastructural and policy gaps, stakeholder perceptions and concerns, and ways to mitigate the gaps in the BBIN sub-region regarding furthering multi-modal connectivity initiatives.

Objectives of the Project

- Address implementation challenges of the BBIN MVA
- Identify the gaps in infrastructure policy and regulations, which can pose hurdles to multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region
- Identify and underscore the scale and impact of contemporary infrastructure connectivity initiatives
- Identify possible livelihood generation opportunities that can be generated through the development of regional/sub-regional/bilateral value chains and their facilitation through multi-modal connectivity along the identified economic corridors, with an emphasis on how that will enhance women's economic empowerment along those economic corridors
- Organise multi-level, multi-stakeholder advocacy and awareness generation to push for identified infrastructure development and policy, regulatory and procedural changes towards effective multi-modal connectivity in this sub-region

Project Website Link: <https://bit.ly/3BbVZQ8>

2. Objectives of the End-of-the-Project Evaluation

2.1 This evaluation has three objectives:

- a) Assess the success of the project in achieving its stated objectives – quality of research and advocacy tools
- b) Assess the robustness and long-term relevance of the project – Advocacy success through case studies and stories
- c) Provide recommendations for future connectivity development programmes in the Bay of Bengal and Indo-Pacific regions, particularly for enhancing connectivity and trade between South and Southeast Asia (2 pages)

3. Scope and Focus of the Evaluation

Assessment Questions	
Parameter	Questions
1. Relevance	<p>Assess the design and focus of the project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the Project objectives and design of interventions achieve its overall objectives? 2. What and how much progress has been made towards achieving the overall outputs and outcomes of the project to enable a political economy discourse for multi-modal connectivity in the sub-region? 3. To what extent were the results (impacts, outcomes and outputs) achieved? 4. Were the strategies identified, and were they realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results?
2. Effectiveness	<p>Describe the project management processes and their appropriateness in supporting the delivery of results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the project effective in achieving its objectives, outputs, and its expected results? 2. To what extent did the Project's M&E mechanism contribute in meeting project results? 3. How effective were the strategies and tools used in the implementation of the project? 4. How effective has the project been in responding to the needs of the stakeholders, and what results were achieved? 5. How did the pandemic affected project implementation and what activities were planned to overcome the constraints caused by the pandemic? 6. To what extent the project was able to ring in gender dimension in project implementation?
3. Efficiency	<p>Evaluate the project's efficiency in respect to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent has the project activities delivered results in an economic and timely way? 2. Did the actual or expected results (outputs and outcomes) justify the costs incurred? <p>Were the resources effectively utilised?</p>

	<p>3. How has the project used the findings and recommendations of mid-term evaluation to improve implementation and achieve outcomes?</p> <p>4. How efficient was the project in adapting to change in context, unforeseen challenges (political/pandemic) and repurposing to meet the expected results and capitalise on potential opportunities?</p> <p>5. How good was the project team's collaboration with the partner organisations, funding agency and knowledge partner?</p> <p>6. Does the management team has the sufficient capacity to keep an overview of financial and project management, including that of project partners?</p>
4. Impact	<p>List down the project's impact in terms of:</p> <p>1. What impact has the project made in the political economy ecosystem for connectivity and trade in the BBIN sub-region?</p> <p>2. Did the advocacy activities of the project get sufficient participation and attention from the governments in the sub-region and other relevant stakeholders?</p> <p>3. To what extent did the project manage to improve the knowledge, capacity and practices of various stakeholders and partners on multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region?</p> <p>4. What changes have happened in the sub-region due to the outreach and influence of the project?</p> <p>5. To what extent did the project collaboration and partnership among different partners and what impact it had on ways of working among diverse partners engaged in a regional project of this nature</p> <p>6. Has the project helped in the addressing the implementation challenges of the BBIN MVA?</p> <p>7. Has the project contributed in identifying and addressing current transport connectivity infrastructure gaps and further, potential infrastructure investment opportunities in the BBIN sub-region?</p>

5. Sustainability	<p>Highlight the sustainability aspects of the project as per:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent are the benefits of the projects likely to be sustained after the completion of this project? 2. To what extent has the project been successful in mobilising stakeholders, like-minded networks, and actors to ensure sustainability of the project outcomes, coalitions, partnership systems, and impacts? 3. How sustainable were the solution identified and advocated, in dealing with the challenges identified under the project? 4. Have the outcomes, such as change in stakeholders' behaviour, contributed to outcomes' sustainability by opening up of new areas for collaboration and research/and or related knowledge baseline for future actions by different stakeholders? 5. Describe key factors that will require attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability of the project outcomes and the potential for replication of the approach?
6. Coherence	<p>Compare the project in respect to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How compatible has the project been with other similar interventions in the BBIN sub-region? 2. Were there any synergy, or trade-off between results from member countries in the sub-region? 3. How well does the project align with, and capitalise on, the existing/emerging geopolitics at the country/sub-regional level? 4. Has the partnership adopted appropriate measures to address capacity and implementation challenges at local/national/sub-regional levels?

4. Methodology for the Evaluation

4.1 This end-of-the-project evaluation will be carried out by giving due consideration to recent developments, particularly with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be ensured that all country-specific Covid-19 related protocols are strictly followed while conducting this evaluation.

4.2 The evaluation will provide qualitative evaluation through the following methods:

- Desk study and review of all relevant project documentation including project documents, quarterly progress reports, annual progress report, financial reports, reports of the project advisory committee meetings and national reference group meetings, other event reports.
- Analysis of the project outputs, activities and events organised as part of the project
- In depth interviews to gather primary data from key stakeholders using a structured methodology
- Focussed discussion and interviews with project team, partner organisations, project advisory committee (PAC) members, supporting agencies, and other stakeholders including people surveyed as part of the project, and departments and agencies the team contacted as part of the advocacy
- Analysis of the media outreach (conventional and social media) of the project
- Observations

5. Evaluation Schedule

5.1 Duration: September 01, 2022 – December 15, 2022

5.2 Inception report is to be submitted by 15th September 2022.

5.3 Draft report is to be submitted on/before 15th November, 2022. This will require a presentation to be made by the evaluation agency covering major findings and key learnings from the project.

5.4 The draft will be finalised after addressing comments on, or before 15th December, 2022.

6. Deliverables and Outline of the Evaluation Report

6.1 The deliverables are as follows:

- Inception report
- Draft report of the evaluation. This will require a presentation to be made by the evaluation agency/expert covering major findings, and key learnings from the project.
- The draft will be finalised after addressing comments on, or before 15th December, 2022.

6.2 The evaluation report will be a concise, content rich and presentable report that fully answers the review objectives/questions, and provides clear recommendations for donors and implementing partners that will help inform future connectivity development programmes.

6.3 The outline for the report is as follows (approximately 25 pages including an executive summary and excluding endnotes, tables/graphs/charts, references and any other supporting documents, which are to be annexed with the report):

- Executive Summary (1 page)
- Background and Context (0.5 page)
- Purpose (0.5 page)
- Methodology (1 page)
- Objective 1 of the Evaluation: Quality of research and advocacy tools (10 pages)

- Objective 2 of the Evaluation: Advocacy success through case studies and stories (10 pages)
- Objective 3 of the Evaluation: Recommendations for future connectivity development programmes in the Bay of Bengal and Indo-Pacific regions, particularly for enhancing connectivity and trade between South and Southeast Asia (2 pages)

7. Skills and Qualifications of the Evaluating Agency

7.1 The essential competencies and experience that the evaluating agency need to possess are as follows:

- Strong knowledge about multi-modal connectivity related developments and regional geopolitical dynamics, such as in South Asia, the BBIN sub-region
- Demonstrated experience of 7 to 10 years in writing concise, high-quality evaluation report or reviews of development programmes/projects for development cooperation partners such as the FCDO, UK and/or multilateral agencies such as the World Bank Group, the Asian Development Bank
- Demonstrated experience in conducting in-person and telephonic/virtual interviews of key informants and also conducting focused group discussions
- Team Leader should have Masters' degree in Public Policy, International Development, Development Economics/Planning, Economics, International Relations/ Diplomacy or any other relevant university degree; **or** equivalent experience demonstrating strong evaluation report writing skills
- Proficiency in English and Hindi. Working knowledge in other regional languages is an added advantage

8. Management Arrangement

8.1 The M-Connect project team in CUTS will assist the evaluation team in the process of this evaluation, as and when required. The evaluation team will report and deliver outputs to CUTS and FCDO.

9. Geographic Coverage and Number of Days in Specific Locations

- Bangladesh: Dhaka (3 working days)
- Bhutan: Thimphu (3 working days)
- India: New Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata (3 working days each)
- Nepal: Kathmandu (3 working days)

10. Selection Criteria, Process and Award of the Contract

10.1 Proposals received for this 'End-of-the-Project Evaluation' will be evaluated based on Quality- and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS) method, giving equal weightage to the quality of the proposal and the cost of the services.

10.2 The selection and the award of the contract will be based on the following criteria:

- a. demonstrable experience of working on regional connectivity and trade programmes
- b. technical expertise for carrying out research and evaluation of such programmes in South Asia and/or the BBIN sub-region

- c. demonstrated understanding of and commitment to ethical issues in research/evaluations
- d. experience in managing and coordinating evaluation/research exercises, including with or through country-based partners, delivering agreed outputs on time and as per agreed cost
- e. ability to write high quality, clear, concise reports in English
- f. selected consultant(s) will also be expected to make a commitment to the work for the entire evaluation period

11. How to Apply

11.1 Evaluation agencies interested in this assignment are required to submit:

- detailed technical proposals describing previous work done in this area and related technical knowledge and expertise, including but not limited to:
 - a. brief methodology for the above scope and focus of evaluation
 - b. work plan and timeline
 - c. summary of the agency's capability and relevant work experience
 - d. experience of the agency's work on regional connectivity and trade issues
 - e. team composition: qualification and profile of the Team Leader and other team members
- financial proposal should include:
 - a. detailed cost including consultancy fee, travel and accommodation cost, and applicable taxes for the assignment accompanied by a cost breakdown showing days/hours spent (per individual involved)
 - b. payment milestones
 - c. any exclusion of cost item(s) not included in the detailed break-up which may be borne by CUTS to carry out the assignment
 - d. assumptions and any other terms of conditions that need the attention of CUTS while evaluating the financial proposal

11.2 Applications, completed in all respect, should be submitted by 17th June 2022 to citee@cuts.org, with copy to vv1@cuts.org, sps@cuts.org, and swv@cuts.org.