

Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting

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

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

16.30-18.30 HRS (Indian Standard Time)

Background Note

The need for a seamlessly connected Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) sub-region is becoming more important for regional cooperation, economic development and growth. Particularly in the context of resilience and robustness of post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery, it is imperative to establish multi-modal connectivity to reduce logistics costs and establish robust supply chains. This can be achieved through a participatory approach of all stakeholders, which can help address broader development issues of poverty, infrastructural development and unemployment.

It is necessary to create a well-informed political economy discourse to embark upon large-scale multi-modal connectivity initiatives in the BBIN sub-region. It is critical to understand the current discourse on political will and identify gaps in infrastructure, policy and regulations, which can pose hurdles to multi-modal connectivity in the sub-region.

In this context, since January 2020, CUTS International, with support from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is implementing a 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, Bhutan Media and Communications Institute, 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.

The project has now reached an important phase of dissemination and outreach for stakeholders' buy-in and policy push. Keeping this in mind, the second Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, September 28, 2021. The specific purpose of the meeting is to update the PAC members on the progress of the project, outputs produced and to gather suggestions, inputs and guidance from them on effective dissemination of findings among the concerned stakeholders, particularly policy-making bodies at the national and sub-national levels, and civil society organisations.

Proposed Agenda

16:30 – 16:40 pm	Welcome Remarks and Objective of the Meeting Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International
16:40 – 16:50 pm	Opening Remarks and Chair Tariq Karim, Political Analyst & Independent Consultant; Director, Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies, Independent University, Bangladesh; Former Advisory Consultant, World Bank, South Asia Regional Integration and Regional Engagement Programme
16:50 – 17:15 pm	Presentation of the Project Findings and Critical Observations Suresh P Singh & Jithin Sabu, CUTS International <i>This presentation will be based on the findings and observations of the project, which were derived from the field surveys and other research outputs of the project, such as Briefing Papers, Discussion Papers, Working Notes, Field Diaries, and webinars conducted as part of the project.</i>
17:15 – 18:15 pm	Open House Discussion PAC Members <i>Besides making reflections and talking about the progress made by the project and its findings, the PAC members can pitch in with their suggestions, inputs and provide guidance for effective implementation of the dissemination and outreach phase of the project.</i>
18:15 – 18:30 pm	Concluding remarks and Vote of Thanks Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International