

India National Reference Group (NRG) Meeting

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

September 10, 2021

Background Note

The need for a seamlessly connected Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) sub-region is becoming more and more important for greater intra and inter-regional connectivity. 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 improve the modal mix. This can be achieved through a participatory approach, which can help address broader development issues of poverty, growth and development.

To embark upon large-scale multi-modal connectivity initiatives in the BBIN sub-region, it is necessary to create a well-informed political economy discourse. 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.

As part of the project, 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. A number of research outputs have been published and several webinars organised over this period to further the project's goals and objectives. These research works provide critical information on the current status of infrastructure and connectivity on four corridors, existing gaps, and ways to mitigate infrastructure and other gaps in the BBIN sub-region regarding furthering multi-modal connectivity initiatives.

The project has reached a critical phase of dissemination and outreach for stakeholders' buy-in and policy push. Keeping this in mind, India's National Reference Group (NRG) meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 10, 2021. The purpose of the meeting is to update the NRG members on the project's progress, outputs produced and gather feedback, inputs, and recommendations on effective dissemination of findings among the concerned stakeholders, particularly policy-making bodies at the national sub-national levels and civil society organisations.

Agenda

05:30 – 05:45 pm	Welcome Remarks and Objective of the Meeting Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International
05:45 – 06:15 pm	Project Findings and Critical Observations CUTS International <i>This presentation will be based on the findings and observations derived from the field surveys and other project research outputs, such as Briefing Papers, Discussion Papers, Working Notes, Field Diaries, and Webinars conducted as a part of the project.</i>
06:15 – 7:15 pm	Open House Discussion NRG Members <i>Besides making reflections and talking about the progress made by the project and its findings, the NRG members can pitch in with their suggestions, inputs and guide for effective implementation of the dissemination and outreach phase of the project.</i>
07:15 – 07:30 pm	Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International