

Operational Strategy Note

Enabling a Political Economy Discourse for Multi-modal Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region

CUTS International
January 2020

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1. Background

- 1.1 With changing geo-politics and increasing shift of the global economic gravity towards the east, it is increasingly felt that a more integrated Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) sub-region is critical for regional and global economic growth, balance and also political stability for shared prosperity with security. The political push behind sub-regional and regional blocs like BBIN and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) also aptly indicates the increasing buzz and consensus around regional integration.
- 1.2 The introduction of BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (BBIN MVA) in 2015 and India's willingness to stimulate integration with concurring countries on its east is greatly reflected through its engagement with the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific regions. India and Bangladesh are together pushing some of the most ambitious bilateral cooperation in the two nation's history, on multi-modal (rail, road, maritime and waterways) and people-to-people connectivity which will also benefit Bhutan and Nepal.
- 1.3 CUTS work on facilitating the implementation of the BBIN MVA¹ was able to generate informed discussion among stakeholders in the four countries through evidence-based advocacy, facilitative dialogues, and capacity building. In order to embark upon large-scale multi-modal connectivity, it is necessary for them to create an enabling environment for a well-informed political economy discourse towards that end as well. That, in turn, will require a clear understanding of ground-level challenges in terms of infrastructure, policy and regulatory gaps and also the extent of ownership at the subnational and national levels for larger connectivity plans.
- 1.4 Pursuing this goal, CUTS developed a project entitled 'Enabling a Political Economy Discourse for Multi-modal Connectivity in the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) Sub-region' (hereafter referred as M-Connect) with support from the Department for International Development (DFID), UK. This project to be implemented over a period of 2 years would aim in creating an enabling political economy discourse to ensure that future regional/sub-regional/bilateral connectivity initiatives are politically balanced, economically equitable and structurally flexible so that there are more acceptances for them from all relevant stakeholders, particularly those at the grassroots.
- 1.5 This document (Operational Strategy Note, or OSN) would act as a ready reference for members of the project team and partners involved with this project, and help in effective implementation, management and reporting of the project.

¹ <https://cuts-citee.org/bbinmva/>

2. About the Project

- 2.1 The purpose of this project is to create an enabling environment for a political economy discourse on multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region. By studying the necessary conditions and factors responsible for successful regional/sub-regional/bilateral connectivity initiatives in Central, South and Southeast Asian countries (for example, Ashgabat Agreement² and multi-modal corridors in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) region; GMS (Greater Mekong Sub-region) Railways Network; Bangladesh-India Coastal Shipping Agreement), its initial focus will be on positioning advocacy messages to address implementation challenges of the BBIN MVA.
- 2.2 Through grassroots-level stakeholders' engagement and associated discourse mapping, it aims to generate evidence and create knowledge for better political and social tractions at the ground level for fostering multi-modal connectivity in this sub-region, with specific emphasis on the development of hard infrastructure, technical assistance, and capacity building programmes for developing infrastructure-related regulations and regulatory bodies, livelihood generations, and women's economic empowerment.
- 2.3 It will draw from the recent and on-going work by CUTS and other relevant bodies such as the World Bank Group, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on road connectivity in the same region and deepen that work by including other modes, particularly waterways including coastal shipping and railways in this discourse. Based on the evidence gathered through its earlier work and those to be drawn from that of other bodies, this project will focus on three economic corridors in this sub-region where regional/sub-regional/bilateral value chains exist or can be developed and will then look at their existing and future links from the perspectives of multi-modal connectivity. These economic corridors will be looking at the possibilities of developing multi-modal connectivity between:
- Nepal-India-Bangladesh
 - Bhutan-India-Bangladesh
 - Eastern India-Bangladesh-Northeast India
- 2.4 The project will contribute to:
- effective implementation of the BBIN MVA so that alternate income generation are explored for losers of livelihood opportunities;
 - inclusive connectivity protocols for different modes of transportation;

² **Ashgabat Agreement:** The Ashgabat agreement is a multi-modal transport agreement between the governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, India and Oman for creating an International transport and transit corridor. The Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan (ITK) railway line will be the major route under the Ashgabat Agreement.

- highlight the infrastructure needs and regulations with respect to multi-modal connectivity for strengthening/fostering cross-border value chains along the identified economic corridors;
- identify specific livelihood related linkages that can be nurtured in this sub-region through the development of multi-modal connectivity based economic corridors; and
- help understand how multi-modal connectivity development and ensuing economic gains can be better linked to poverty reduction, with an emphasis on enhancing women's economic empowerment along those economic corridors.

2.5 The project is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- effective implementation of the BBIN MVA;
- comprehensive understanding of political economy challenges of initiating multi-modal connectivity initiatives in the BBIN sub-region, which will help create an enabling political economy discourse and action agenda for multi-modal connectivity initiatives in this sub-region;
- identification of critical and prioritised infrastructure needs to enable multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region through linkages between and among roads, inland waterways including coastal shipping and railways;
- a better understanding of domestic and regional policies, regulations, existing/proposed protocols and trade/transport processes and practices with regard to transport and transit³ using multi-modal connectivity system and hence better understanding of the reforms needed at the local, sub-national, national and sub-regional levels; and
- better understanding of stakeholder concerns and costs from multi-modal connectivity initiatives, with particular reference to local economic development parameters (better livelihood generations), political and socio-economic realities at the ground level along identified economic corridors and ports, with emphasis on how it can positively impact women's economic empowerment and hence the action points and strategies to ensure that they are gainful, inclusive and implementable.

3. Project Duration: Two years (Jan 2020 to Dec 2021)

4. Implementing Partners

4.1 CUTS International is the main implementing partner of DFID for M-Connect project. It is liable to deliver all the deliverables as per the contract. Since the

³ For all intents and purposes of the project, the term 'transit' embodies the subject matter included in the Article 11 (Freedom of Transit) of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Please refer Annexure 1 for more details on Article 11.

project is being implemented in four countries, including India, CUTS has signed a contract with three other partners (at tier 2): one each in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. The details of all partners are given in Delivery Chain Map in the figure below.

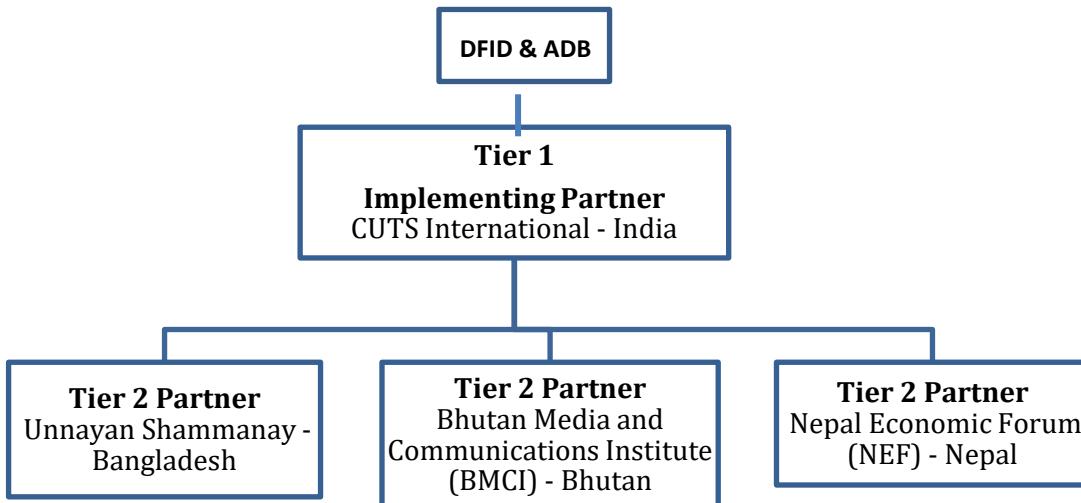


Figure 1: Delivery Chain Map under M-Connect Project CUTS may reach out to local partners, if required, for conducting a survey. The details of those partners will be shared in an updated delivery chain map at a later stage.

ADB as a knowledge partner

As a knowledge partner, ADB will explore complementarities between its transport connectivity work in various regions of Asia (SASEC, CAREC, GMS) and M-Connect project on political economy aspects of multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region. In doing so, CUTS will draw lessons from ADB's initiatives in these regions and will provide inputs to ADB's work, particularly stakeholders' views/concerns from the ground.

ADB's specific participation in M-Connect project will be in the following manner.

Participation in Project Advisory Committee meetings and other major project-related meetings such as the Project Inception Meeting, National Advocacy Dialogue, and Regional Policy Dialogue.

Guidance to scoping visits to draw lessons from ADB's existing connectivity initiatives in SASEC, CAREC and GMS regions and to fieldwork in the BBIN sub-region, including putting in touch with the relevant ADB persons in those countries and provide suggestions on key persons to meet.

Provide feedback and inputs to various deliverables of this project

5. Activity Matrix

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|-------|--|---|---------------|--|---|
| 1. | Literature review – i. Ashgabat Agreement and multi-modal economic corridors in the CAREC region. ii. GMS (Greater Mekong Sub-region) Railways Network iii. Bangladesh-India Coastal Shipping Agreement iv. BBIN MVA | <i>To understand the necessary conditions and factors responsible for their success</i> <i>To identify the implementation challenges of MVA</i> | Jan- Feb 2020 | Total 3 reports review of major agreements/initiatives in these 3 sub-regions <i>(maximum 2000 words each)</i> Draft questionnaire for scoping visits A note on implementation challenges of MVA (1000 words) | CUTS Team i. MSH ii. DCH iii. CHR ARG |
| 2. | Finalising Contract with Partners | Drafting of Terms of Reference (ToR) and Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) | Jan-Feb 2020 | 4 MoUs signed with partners | CUTS team VV and GCJ |
| 3. | Constitution of Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and National Reference Groups (NRG) | Eminent experts from the BBIN sub-region (2 from each country + experts from ADB, UNESCAP and WB) will form the PAC. Country-specific national reference groups (NRGs) comprising 15-20 relevant governmental and non-governmental | Jan-Feb 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One PAC • 4 NRGs • A note on PAC • A note on 4 NRGs | CUTS BMCI NEF Unnayan Shamannay |

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|--------------|---|--|-----------------|---|--|
| | | <p>stakeholders will also be constituted in each country</p> <p><i>The purpose of PAC members is to guide the project deliverables whereas NRG would aim to understand opportunities for fostering multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region and possible approaches towards addressing expected challenges.</i></p> | | | |
| 4. | <p>Scoping Visits in 8 countries</p> <p>BBIN + Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan + multi-modal corridor 2 of CAREC in Central Asia and Cambodia, and Vietnam in GMS</p> | <p>10-15 stakeholders have to be identified in each country.</p> <p>Inputs from visits to Central Asia and GMS will be used for finalising the reports for the respective regions.</p> <p><i>The list of stakeholders, locations and the questionnaire will be finalised after discussing with ADB.</i></p> | Feb- March 2020 | <p>Four reports on scoping visits to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Eastern, and Northeast India and Nepal</p> | <p>CUTS team will take prior appointments for KII and conduct the visits in India, Central Asia, and GMS.</p> <p>CUTS partners will identify stakeholders in the respective countries, fix appointments and undertake the visits in respective countries; However, CUTS will also participate in those visits.</p> |

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5. | Inception Meeting and PAC meeting <i>(To discuss the deliverables of literature review and scoping visits and sensitise key people about the expected project outcomes)</i> | <p>One day Inception meeting in New Delhi or Kolkata with a total of 40 participants including 20 international participants (partners, PAC from BBIN, key persons from government and non-government sector, academia, media, and multilateral institutions)</p> <p>One day PAC meeting with 20 participants including CUTS partners and PAC members) PAC members will give <i>constructive feedback on draft reports and the survey locations and key stakeholders to be interviewed.</i></p> | April- May 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception meeting report • PAC meeting report | CUTS 2 persons from each partner will participate in the meeting and also assist CUTS in getting the participation of key persons from the respective country |
| The expected outcome of the Inception Phase (Jan to April 2020): <i>CUTS and its partners will have a better understanding of domestic and regional policies, regulations, existing/proposed protocols and trade/transport processes and practices with regard to transport and transit using multi-modal connectivity system. Key stakeholders are sensitized about the project and expected outcomes. 3 reports on successful agreements in CAREC, GMS and BBIN as well as a note on implementation challenges of BBIN with three to five key advocacy messages will be finalised. PAC and NRGs are on board. Three corridors and major railheads, riverports and seaports in BBIN countries will be identified for field research purposes.</i> | | | | | |
| 6. | Field Research in 3 economic corridors <u>6 River ports:</u> | Fieldwork will involve KII's with govt officials in the (Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Railways, Shipping), Port Authority, | July-Sept 2020 (fieldwork) Oct-Dec | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 field reports (maximum 2000 words each) | CUTS will conduct field research in India, accompany partners in the respective countries |

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|-------|--|--|---|---|--|
| | <p>3 ports on India-Bangladesh 2 ports on India-Nepal 1 port on India-Bhutan</p> <p><u>6 Railheads:</u> India-Bangladesh - 3, India-Nepal - 2, India-Bhutan – 1</p> <p><u>3 Seaports:</u> India-Bangladesh</p> | Think Tanks, Logistics Companies, Transporters FGD with Support Service Providers, etc | 2020 (data analysis and report writing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four country-specific stakeholder engagement perceptions index⁴ (SEPI) Three corridor specific case studies (1500 words each) | <p>for the survey and will prepare reports for India.</p> <p>Partners will have to identify stakeholders and schedule meetings before the field visits.</p> <p>CUTS will share the tool for SEPI with partners.</p> <p>Partners will prepare the country-wise report of fieldwork and assist CUTS in preparing the case studies.</p> |

Expected outcome of Research Phase: *Better understanding of stakeholder concerns and costs from multi-modal connectivity initiatives, with particular reference to local economic development parameters (better livelihood generations), political and socio-economic realities at the ground level along identified economic corridors and ports, with emphasis on how it can positively impact women's economic empowerment and hence the action points and strategies to ensure that they are gainful, inclusive and implementable.*

⁴ The SEPI is a simple non-quantitative tool, developed by CUTS International to help the National Implementation Units (NIU) and the National Steering Committee (NSC) assess the performance of their engagement efforts with NSAs against the best practices contained in the Engagement Guidebook of the EIF. This evaluation should then serve as the baseline for improving the design of future engagement processes. The SEPI can be administered online by the NIU, since it is designed as a self-assessment tool for the NIAs' engagement process.

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|---|---|--|------------------|---|---|
| 7. | National Reference Group Meeting (NRG): <i>(to validate research findings in the respective country and gain critical inputs before finalisation)</i> | One day NRG meeting in each of BBIN countries with <i>total of 25 participants including 4 from organisers</i> | Jan- Feb 2021 | 4 NRG reports | Implementing partner will organise NRG in the respective country and also prepare the event report |
| 8 | 2 nd PAC meeting <i>To get feedback on overall research outputs and overall project activities</i> | One day PAC meeting with 20 participants including CUTS partners and PAC members) | March 2021 | PAC meeting report Finalisation of case studies and research reports | CUTS |
| Expected Outcome of Review Phase: <i>Contribute towards formulating an inclusive transport and transit protocols for effective multi-modal connectivity in this sub-region through a participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholder groups</i> | | | | | |
| 9 | National Advocacy Dialogue (NAD) <i>New Delhi</i> | One-day advocacy dialogues will be organised in the national capitals of all the four countries with about 25 participants from various parts of country including organisers, PAC members policy champions and representatives from NRG, government officials etc | April- June 2021 | 4 event reports | Implementing partner will organise NRG in the respective country and will also prepare the event report |
| 10 | Video Documentary <i>(to highlight aspirations and concerns of grassroots level stakeholders on multi-modal connectivity in the</i> | CUTS will hire a professional video documentary consultant to produce a documentary and assist them in writing script and visiting locations | June- Aug 2021 | One Video Documentary | CUTS |

| Sl No | Activity | Description | Timeline | Outputs | Responsibilities |
|--|---|--|---------------|--|-------------------|
| | <i>BBIN sub-region)</i> | | | | |
| 11 | Regional Policy Dialogue-Dhaka and 3 rd PAC meeting <i>to discuss major findings and recommendations, deliberate on the impacts of the project, and chart a forward-looking action agenda for better trade and economic integration in the BBIN sub-region</i> | One and half-day meeting with participants including policymakers, experts, local level government officials, business associations, development partners, civil society organisations and media from the BBIN sub-region. | Oct- Nov 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of RPD • Forward-looking action agenda • PAC meeting report | CUTS |
| <i>The expected outcome of advocacy phase: Create an enabling political economy discourse and action agenda for multi-modal connectivity initiatives in this sub-region.</i> | | | | | |
| 12 | Independent project evaluation | CUTS will engage an independent agency to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. | Nov- Dec 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation Report | CUTS |
| 13 | Project report and other compliance documents | CUTS will prepare a comprehensive project report capturing all the interventions and outputs | Nov-Dec 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One project report | CUTS and partners |

6. Time Matrix (for 24 months starting from January 2020 to December 2021)

| Sn. | Activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | Desk Research | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | MoU with Partners | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Constitution of PAC and NRG | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Scoping Visits and Reports | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Inception Meeting and PAC Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Field Research and Reports, Case Studies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | NRG meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 2 nd PAC Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | National Advocacy Dialogue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Regional Advocacy Dialogue and 3 rd PAC Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Video Documentary | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Independent Evaluation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Project Report | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

7. Risk Management

There are various ways by which CUTS envisages managing the risks in this project. Though it is difficult to enumerate all the risks at this moment and their possible management, CUTS has used some of the following effective methods in addressing risks while implementing projects of similar nature and magnitude:

- i. A renowned international Project Advisory Committee would guide the methodology of the project implementation
- ii. National Reference Group (NRG) would be identified by CUTS and its country partners in consultation with CUTS (CUTS already have existing NRGs, in some of the countries and may re-constitute them) and engage with the process of project implementation in each country. This would help enhance the acceptability and local ownership of the project activities.
- iii. In addition to a set of primary responsibilities, each project team member would also need to handle certain secondary responsibilities. This would help, especially in the case of staff turnovers.
- iv. It is a practice at CUTS to document all discussions and activities so that there is an institutional memory which helps when carrying out mid-course corrections; and to counter challenges if project staff leaves the organisation during the course of the project.
- v. MoU would be entered into between CUTS and the partner organisations, and these would clearly indicate the responsibilities and deliverables of the partner organisations.
- vi. The agencies supporting this project have already laid down clear, precise and periodic reporting requirements in their respective contracts, which would be complied with.
- vii. In addition to external audits, internal audits would also be undertaken in accordance with the requirements laid down by the authorities for management of a project of this nature, (as CUTS has done before in such cases).
- viii. There could be cultural differences that may arise while working in different countries. This may be mitigated by involving local partners and local contractors who understand the local culture very well.
- ix. If a key person leaves, CUTS would not let the project implementation process suffer. CUTS has sufficient number of research and programme staff who would serve as a backup until new recruitments are done.

The project would depend on measures explained in the table below to mitigate risks (strategic, tactical and operational) that may adversely affect the project from deriving the anticipated outcomes.

Table: M-Connect Risk Management Strategy

| Risks | Probability of Occurrence | Likely Impact | Mitigation |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|--|
| Project is unable to elicit support from other key stakeholders (like government departments, regulators, policymakers and business community) | Low | Low to Medium | Some of the key stakeholders (the relevant institutions) would be involved in undertaking project activities in partnership with the local partner organisation. This would ensure greater ownership of the project and its outputs. Various efforts would be made right from the beginning of the project to ensure buy-in from relevant government departments and agencies. The involvement of ADB as a knowledge partner would facilitate identifying key stakeholders in various government departments and institutions in implementing countries. |
| Low level of interest among policymakers about the project outputs. | Medium | Medium | Key actors would be included in the NRGs in each country, especially those who have the advantage of engaging with key policymakers. Policymakers would be invited to the Inception Meeting to generate their interest in project outputs/deliverables. |
| Difficulty in obtaining data in the selected sectors | Low | Medium | CUTS has significant work experience and networks in the project countries and will further develop linkages with institutions that can help obtain useful data. Involving key personnel as PAC and NRG members and knowledge partners in respective countries. |
| Project activities are not completed on time | Low | Low to Medium | A process of review of the activities would be done periodically by the project team. Necessary inputs/resources needed would be facilitated on time for the implementation of activities. |

| Risks | Probability of Occurrence | Likely Impact | Mitigation |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|--|
| The departure of key project staff | Low to Medium | Medium | The sound HR policies would ensure that experienced staff would be available to be engaged, at all stages of the project. |
| Currency rate fluctuations | Low | Medium | All expenses have been drawn up in Indian Rupees (INR), given that the project would be implemented from India. The provision of contingency funds has been made in the project (budget) to take care of this. |
| Inflation in project countries leading to financial pressures on activities | Low | Low | The provision of contingency funds has been made in the project (budget) to take care of this, in case it is seen that such inflation can significantly impact the project activities. |

8. Financial Management

The Finance and Administration Team (CUTS) would maintain records of the project expenditures and shall be responsible for preparing periodic financial reports together with the M-Connect project team. The Finance and Administration Team at CUTS shall also be responsible for overseeing the audit of financial records of this project. The audit of the project would be undertaken by a qualified Audit firm, with experience of having audited similar assignments of CUTS earlier.

CUTS has adopted certain policies (e.g., General Accounting Policy, CUTS Procurement Policy, CUTS HR Policy) for maintaining transparency and accountability of its operations. These policies would be appropriately applied for the M-Connect project.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of CUTS internal M&E, a quarterly reporting format will be developed to capture the progress of activities during the reporting period and the planned activities for the next quarter. The narrative report will be supplemented by a quarterly report on financial expenditures. The progress of activities will be marked against the indicators mentioned in the log frame given below.

10. M&E log frame

| Objective | Input | Activity | Indicator | | Baseline | Milestone | Output | Outcome | Impact | | |
|---|--|--|--------------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|---|---|--------|--|--|
| 1. Addressing implementation challenges of the BBIN MVA 2. Identification of gaps in infrastructure policy and regulations, which can pose hurdles to multi-modal connectivity in this sub-region; | 1. Grant from DFID 2. Human Resources From CUTS and partners 3. Technical Expertise Of PAC 4. CUTS Network And Linkages at grassroots | 1.Secondary research on a) Ashgabat Agreement b) Greater Mekong region railways network c) Bangladesh-India Coastal Shipping Agreement. | Number of reports | Planned | 3 | 3 | Three reports on successful connectivity initiatives in Central, South and Southeast Asian Countries. Draft questionnaire for scoping visits | A better understanding of domestic and regional policies, regulations, existing/proposed protocols and trade/transport processes and practices with regard to transport and transit using multi-modal connectivity system and hence better connectivity | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | Achieved | | | | | | | |
| | | ii Constituting of the Project Advisory Committee | Number of PAC members | Planned | 10 | | A note on PAC 2 PAC meeting reports | | | | |
| | | | | Achieved | | | | | | | |
| | | iii Constituting of NRG | Number of PAC meetings | Planned | 3 | | | | | | |
| | | | | Achieved | | | | | | | |
| | | | Number of NRGs | Planned | 4 | | | | | | |
| | | | | Achieved | | | | | | | |
| | | | Number of members in NRG | Planned | 60-80 ⁵ | | | | | | |
| | | | | Achieved | | | | | | | |

⁵ 15-20 members in each National Reference Group

| Objective | Input | Activity | Indicator | | Baseline | Milestone | Output | Outcome | Impact |
|--|-------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|--|---|--------|
| | | | Number of NRG meetings | Planned Achieved | 4 | | 4 NRG meeting reports | | |
| | | iv. Scoping visits to key countries which are involved in the implementation of these initiatives. | Number of visits | Planned Achieved | 8 | | | | |
| | | | | Planned Achieved | | | | | |
| | | iv. Preparation of country-specific reports based on scoping visit and desk research. | Number of stakeholders | Planned Achieved | 120 | | | | |
| | | | | Planned Achieved | | | | | |
| | | v. Inception meeting | Number of participants | Planned Achieved | 4 | 4 | 1. A note on implementation challenges of the BBIN MVA 2. Four reports on scoping visit | | |
| | | | | Planned Achieved | | | | | |
| 1. Identification of possible livelihood | | vi. Field research | Number of country field reports | Planned Achieved | 15 | 15 | 15 field reports | Identification of critical and prioritised infrastructure | |
| | | | Number of corridor | Planned Achieved | 4 | | | | |
| | | | | Planned Achieved | | | | | |

| Objective | Input | Activity | Indicator | | Baseline | Milestone | Output | Outcome | Impact |
|---|-------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------|--|--------|
| 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 | | | specific case studies | | | | 3 corridor case studies | e needs to enable multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region through linkages between and among roads, inland waterways including coastal shipping and railways | |
| Organising multi-level, multi- | | vii. National Advocacy Dialogue | Number of meetings | Planned Achieved | 4 4 | | | Create an enabling political | |
| | | | Number of | Planned | 25 | | | | |

| Objective | Input | Activity | Indicator | | Baseline | Milestone | Output | Outcome | Impact |
|---|-------|---|--|---|----------|-----------|--------|--|--------|
| 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 | | viii. Regional Advocacy Dialogue ix. Video documentary | participants Number of meetings Number of participants Number of the documentary produced | Achieved Planned 1 Achieved Planned 50 Achieved Planned 1 Achieved | | | | economy discourse and action agenda for multi-modal connectivity initiatives in this sub-region; | |

11. Independent Evaluation

CUTS will engage an independent agency to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The purpose of this evaluation is to document and review the management and implementation of the M-Connect project. This assessment will be targeted for CUTS internal reflection and knowledge management as well as an external understanding of CUTS management and implementation of the project. The assessment will also determine the extent to which the programme was in compliance with donor requirements and identify the lessons learned (successes and challenges) to provide guidance for future programmes.

12. Team Members (CUTS)

Project Director: Bipul Chatterjee (BC)

Project Manager: Arnab Ganguly (ARG)

Senior Researchers: Muvafaq Sheeshaikh (MSH); Sudip Kumar Paul (SKP)

Junior Researchers: Dipanwita Chatterjee (DCH), Chetna Rathore (CHR)

Programme Associates: Vandana Swami (VSW), Sumanta Biswas (SBI)

Communication Assistant: Madhuri Vasnani (MV)

Finance Officer: Gyan Chand Jain (GCJ)

M&E Officer: Amol Kulkarni (AMK)

13. Project Advisory Committee (Proposed List)

Multilateral bodies

1. Kuancheng Huang, Senior Transport Specialist, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, ADB
2. Mandakini Kaul, South Asia Regional Coordinator, World Bank
3. Sandeep Raj Jain, Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Division, UNESCAP

India

4. R.Sushila, Executive Director, Vivada Cruises
5. Arun Roy, Former Director, IWAI

6. Prabir De, Professor and Senior Fellow, Research & Information System for Developing Countries
7. Rajeev Mehrotra, Chairman and Managing Director, RITES

Bangladesh

8. Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
9. Selima Ahmed, Vice-Chairperson, NITOL-NILOY GROUP, President Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)
10. Syed Monowar Hussain, Former Director, BIWTA

Bhutan

11. Tshering Yeshi, General Secretary, Bhutan Exporters Association
12. Aum Phub Zam, PRESIDENT, Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Nepal

13. Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Kathmandu, Nepal
14. Roshee Lamichhane Busal, Assistant Professor, Kathmandu University School of Management.
15. Meena Acharya, General Secretary, Tanka Prasad Memorial Foundation

Annexure 1: Article 11 (Freedom of Transit) of WTO TFA

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| 1. | Any regulations or formalities in connection with traffic in transit imposed by a Member shall not be: (a) maintained if the circumstance or objectives giving rise to their adoption no longer exist or if the changed circumstances or objectives can be addressed in a reasonably available less trade-restrictive manner. (b) applied in a manner that would constitute a disguised restriction on traffic in transit. |
| 2. | Traffic in transit shall not be conditioned upon collection of any fees or charges imposed in respect of transit, except the charges for transportation or those commensurate with administrative expenses entailed by transit or with the cost of services rendered. |
| 3. | Members shall not seek, take or maintain any voluntary restraints or any other similar measures on traffic in transit. This is without prejudice to existing and future national regulations, bilateral or multilateral arrangements related to regulating transport, consistent with WTO rules. |
| 4. | Each member shall accord to products which will be in transit through the territory of any other Member treatment no less favourable than that which would be accorded to such products if they were being transported from their place of origin to their destination without going through the territory of such other member. |
| 5. | Members are encouraged to make available, where practicable, physically separate infrastructure (such as lanes, berths and similar) for traffic in transit. |
| 6. | Formalities, documentation requirements, and customs controls in connection with traffic in transit shall not be more burdensome than necessary to : (a) identify the goods; and (b) ensure fulfilment of transit requirements |
| 7. | Once goods have been put under a transit procedure and have been authorized to proceed from the point of origination in a Member's territory, they will not be subject to any customs charges nor necessary delays or restriction until they conclude their transit at the point of destination within the Member's territory. |
| 8. | Members shall not apply technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures within the meaning of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade to goods in transit. |
| 9. | Members shall allow and provide for advance filling and processing of transit documentation and data prior to the arrival of goods. |
| 10. | Once the traffic in transit has reached the customs office where it exits the territory of a Member, that office shall promptly terminate the transit operation if transit requirements have been met. |
| 11. | Where a member requires a guarantee in the form of a surety, deposit, or other appropriate monetary or non-monetary instrument for traffic in transit, such guarantee shall be limited to ensuring that requirements arising from such traffic in transit are fulfilled. |

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| 12. | Once the member has determined that its transit requirements have been satisfied, the guarantee shall be discharged without delay. |
| 13. | Each Member shall, in a manner consistent with its laws and regulations, allow comprehensive guarantees which include multiple transactions for the same operators or renewal of guarantees without discharge for subsequent consignments. |
| 14. | Each Member shall make publicly available the relevant information it uses to set the guarantee, including a single transaction and, where applicable, multiple transaction guarantee. |
| 15. | Each Member may require the use of customs convoys or customs escorts for traffic in transit only in circumstances presenting high risks or when compliance with customs laws and regulations cannot be ensured through the use of guarantees. General rules applicable to customs convoys or customs escorts shall be published in accordance with Article 1. |
| 16. | Members shall endeavour to cooperate and coordinate with one another with a view to enhancing freedom of transit. Such cooperation and coordination may include, but is not limited to, an understanding on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Charges (b) formalities and legal requirements ; and (c) the practical operation of transit regimes. |
| 17. | Each member shall endeavour to appoint a national transit coordinator to which all inquiries and proposals by other Members relating to the good functioning of transit operations can be addressed. |

Annexure 2: Multi-modal Connectivity Initiatives

1. Central Asia

(a) Ashgabat Agreement

The Ashgabat Agreement is a multimodal transport agreement between the governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Oman for creating an international transport and transit corridor. The Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan railway would be a critical link to the Ashgabat Agreement.

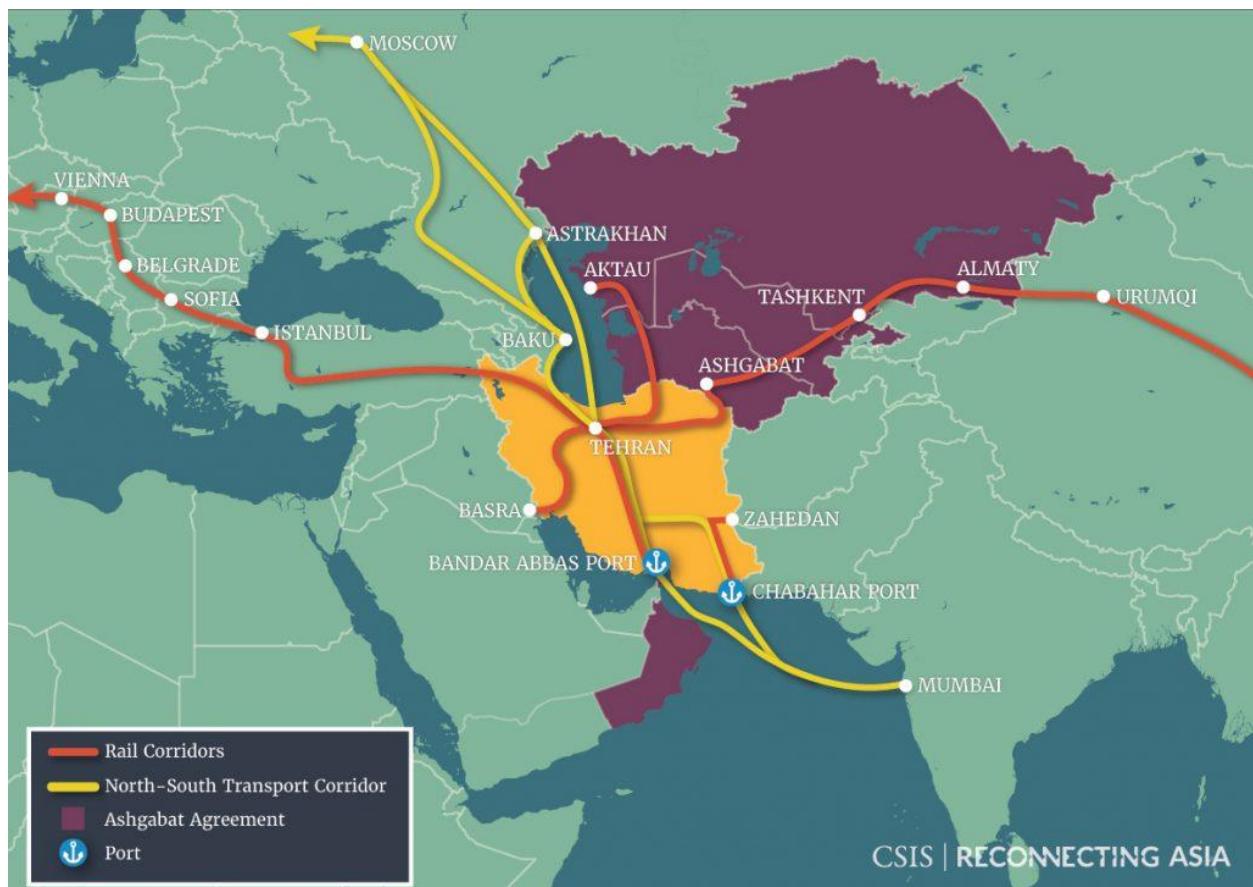


Image source: Centre for Strategic and International Studies

(b) Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) multi-modal corridors

The CAREC is a programme established in 1997 by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to encourage economic cooperation among countries in the Central Asian region. In pursuance with the CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy, the 11 members of the CAREC is undertaking the development of six Central Asia Regional Economic corridors for greater connectivity in the region. Out of this, the CAREC corridor two connects the Caucasus and Mediterranean region to East Asia. The corridor passes through Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic of China. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan thus becomes an important part of the Ashgabat Agreement, CAREC corridor 2 , as well as, possibly the International North-South Transit Corridor.

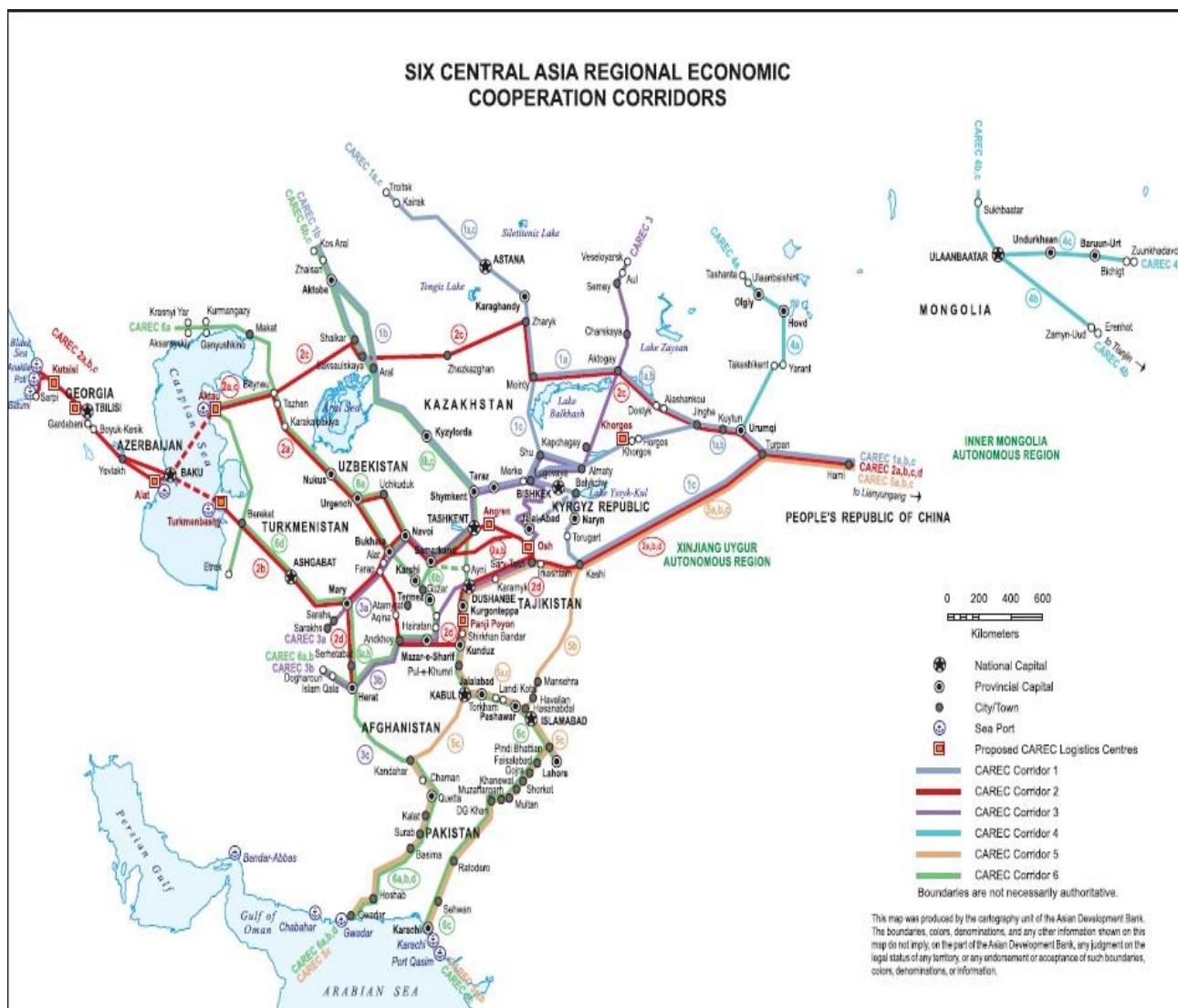


Image source: CAREC

2. Southeast Asia

Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) railway network

The GMS is a transnational grouping of countries in the Mekong River Basin of Southeast Asia. There are six countries in the GMS, viz, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and China. The GMS railway network is one of the most integral parts of the three-pronged strategies of the GMS Programme.



Image source: Asian Development Bank

The rationale behind initial selection of Cambodia and Vietnam is that these two countries have already completed ADB funded transport investment projects that have two completely different nature, for example, completion of GMS Southern Coastal Corridor, as well as Phnom Penh - Ho Chi Minh Road Highway thus leading to improved trade facilitation (customs/immigration facilities) at the border. Furthermore, the aspects pertaining their integration with the Asian Highway as well as Mekong waterways can be explored.

3. South Asia

Indo-Bangladesh Coastal Shipping Agreement

The Agreement on coastal shipping was signed in 2015 to promote trade between India and Bangladesh through ports.

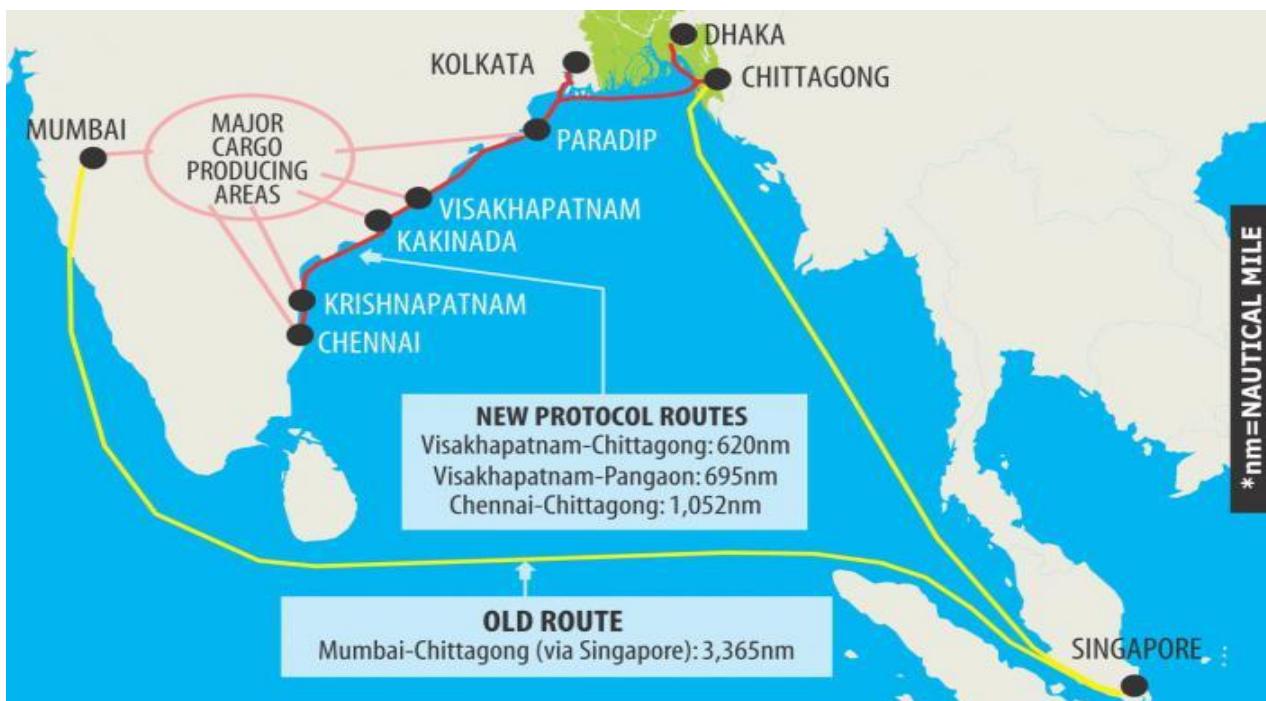


Image source: RMG Bangladesh, The Wire