

## NEPAL

## SASEC Road Connectivity



ADB

Poor road connectivity is a major constraint for Nepal. Its road density is low—14 kilometers (km) per 100 square km (km<sup>2</sup>) or 0.9 km per 1,000 people. The strategic road network, with a total length of about 14,490 km of national and feeder roads, is the core of Nepal's road system. It carries most of the country's road traffic and provides linkages to major economic centers and neighboring countries. This network consists of three main east–west corridors and several north–south corridors. The east–west corridors include the East–West Highway (EWH, 1,024 km), the main artery in the country and the one with the heaviest traffic into the Terai region.

As the backbone of Nepal's national highway system, the EWH must meet minimum technical standards and be passable all year round. Parts of the highway, in particular the main Koshi Barrage in the Sunsari District, are prone to damage from heavy floods and require alternate routes in case of closure.

Nepal actively participates in the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program. The EWH is critical for domestic connectivity, but also key to linking the country to India. The government wants to improve the entire 1,700 km stretch to all-weather maintainable standard. This will connect communities and provide access to basic services. The north–south linkages between EWH and the Mid-Hill East–West Corridor (MHC) also need to be improved.

To facilitate connectivity in Nepal and between Nepal and its neighbors, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the SASEC Road Connectivity Project. The project will provide an alternate route in the Sunsari and Saptari districts. This will create year-round passable conditions along the EWH, especially across the Koshi River. The repair of three feeder roads in the hill areas will improve connectivity between villages along this road system and enable better access to basic services.

## PROJECT FEATURES

**Road upgrading.** About 73 km of bypass roads and border roads along EWH will be upgraded to two-lane standard, and about 114 km of MHC<sup>1</sup> to intermediate-lane standard. The road construction will include community participation, as it will create employment for unskilled laborers, particularly women, in the community. Residents will be trained to become ecoguardians and will earn income by providing accommodation for tourists.

**Regional development.** Local communities will benefit from construction employment, and will later have access to markets, which will result in increased household income. Savings in vehicle operating costs will be passed on to the poor through lower freight rates, lower passenger fares, and time savings. Households in remote areas will benefit from an increase in the availability of goods and a decrease in prices.

**Increased access.** The results of household surveys and focus group discussions indicate that the project will increase economic and employment opportunities, as well as access to markets, production centers, and public and social services.

**Gender equity.** Most local women who travel by foot on earthen tracks that are impassable during the rainy season will have safer, faster, and more comfortable access once the investments are completed. Cash-strapped subsistence farmers, including women, will benefit from other activities such as short-term employment in road construction and maintenance.

At least half of those trained and engaged in bioengineering for slope protection works, and engaged in compensatory afforestation will be women from local communities.

<sup>1</sup> Comprising three pivotal road linkages: Leguwaghat–Bhojpur in Bhojpur District; Halesi–Diktel in Khotang District; and Manthali–Ramechhap in Ramechhap District.



*The project will increase economic and employment opportunities, as well as access to markets and production centers.*



*Improved access to markets and basic services will significantly improve health and education outcomes, especially for women.*

Sources: Project Data Sheet. <http://www.adb.org/projects/38350-013/main>; ADB. 2013. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan and Technical Assistance Grant for the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Road Connectivity Project in Nepal*. Manila. <http://www.adb.org/projects/documents/nep-sasec-road-connectivity-project-rfp>

The project is in line with the strategic directions of ADB's South Asia Department. The strategy focuses on sustainable infrastructure, climate change mitigation and adaptation, human development, regional cooperation and integration, public-private partnership, and good governance.

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## PROJECT AT A GLANCE

**Cost and financing:** Asian Development Fund, \$75 million; Technical Assistance Special Fund, \$500,000; Counterpart, \$22 million

**Project approval date:** 30 July 2013

**Project themes:** Economic growth, regional cooperation and integration, capacity development

**Status of project implementation:** Ongoing

**Executing agency:** Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport

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Link to South Asia Project Briefs:  
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