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Asia's Linear Infrastructure safeGuarding Nature (ALIGN)

The USAID-funded ALIGN Project aims to expand the adoption and implementation of high-quality safeguards to protect biodiversity and livelihoods in response to Asia's rapid expansion of linear infrastructure, especially roads, railways, and power lines.

Asia is experiencing the highest infrastructure investment rates in the world, led by transport and energy sector expansion. The Asian Development Bank estimated that between 2016 and 2030, \$1.7 trillion per year in infrastructure investments is needed to maintain Asia's growth, tackle poverty, and respond to climate change. Asia is home to some of the world's richest biodiversity and most complex ecosystems. Asia's ecosystems contribute to human wellbeing in numerous ways such as underpinning economic vitality, increasing communities' resilience to environmental change, and providing natural resources. Linear infrastructure can have particularly significant impacts on biodiversity, impeding wildlife movement, fragmenting intact natural habitats, and causing widespread land conversion.

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the ALIGN Project is to enhance the development and implementation of effective, high-quality linear infrastructure safeguards that protect people and nature from harm.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Policies and Practices

Strengthen the policy frameworks of government, private and finance sector, and civil society stakeholders and effective application of natural resource safeguards for linear infrastructure by aligning them with international best practices.

Objective 2: Partnership and Engagement

Enhance partnerships to promote and support investment in and implementation of safeguards for linear infrastructure that contribute to improvements in biophysical conditions and adaptive capacity.

Objective 3: Capacity Development

Increase capacity of stakeholders to contribute to better management of natural resources by implementing high-quality natural resource safeguards for linear infrastructure and promoting and applying sustainable infrastructure development options.

EXPECTED RESULTS

1. Policy frameworks related to natural resource safeguards for LI are updated and revised by key ministries, national and international financial institutions, and the private sector.
2. Natural resource safeguards for LI are increasingly called for and/or implemented by government, private and finance sector, and civil society stakeholders in compliance with internationally accepted standards, as illustrated by at least three linear infrastructure projects.
3. National and regional coalitions and civil society organizations are regularly elevating the profile of NR safeguards for LI at influential events and through strategic communications as a highly impactful mechanism for advancing sustainable development.
4. The staff of government agencies, financial institutions, and private companies have an increased awareness of high-quality NR safeguards for linear infrastructure and have the capacity and incentives to apply them at every stage of the project life cycle.

PROGRAM AREAS

The project will address the development and implementation of effective high-quality safeguards throughout Asia with a particular emphasis on three focal countries— India, Mongolia, Nepal.

India

Roads, railways and transmission lines are an essential part of India's development, providing for vital needs of transport, communication, and power. The creation, expansion, and maintenance of such infrastructure also carries, significant ecological and environmental impacts. Such impacts are particularly seen in & around natural areas, especially Protected Areas (PAs) such as Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks, Community Reserves, and Wetlands. Over the years, India has adopted considerable measures to safeguard wildlife. These include the mandatory environmental clearances prior to sanctioning the development of large projects and the clearances by the forest department and various other stakeholder agencies like the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). India is a Party to several international agreements such as CBD, CITIES, Ramsar, IPCC and others as a commitment to conservation and an opportunity to better safeguard wildlife from linear infrastructure. This project presents an opportunity to integrate the best knowledge from ecology, engineering, and other sciences including the social sciences to ensure that biological and physical systems are considered along with human needs and applied to preserve ecosystems. Total budget for project activities in India is \$800,000.

PERFORMANCE PERIOD

September 2021- September 2025

TOTAL BUDGET

\$6.03 million

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

The ALIGN project is implemented by WWF (World Wildlife Fund) in partnership with the Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC). ALIGN project management is based in the WWF Nepal office in Kathmandu, with three focal-country programs led by WWF India, WWF Mongolia, and WWF Nepal.

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