

## ALIGN Project Participates in a Seminar With the Consulting Engineers Association of India

A team member from the ALIGN Project in India, Dr. Ridhima Solanki, presented at a seminar titled “Quality of DPR and Construction of Highway Projects” organized by the Consulting Engineers Association of India (CEAI), an apex body of consulting engineers in India. The seminar took place on January 9–10, 2024, in New Delhi. It was supported by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), National Highways Builders Federation, and Indian Road Congress. Dr. Ridhima Solanki, from ALIGN in India, was invited to present at the seminar and share the ALIGN Project’s perspective and vision to help raise awareness of wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure among engineers.

CEAI has about 400 members—organizations and individuals—and is the only institute in India to represent the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC). CEAI members’ work is inclusive of infrastructure projects, making it a strategic partner to collaborate with ALIGN.

To about 50 delegates, Dr. Solanki presented ecological considerations to make while preparing a detailed project report (DPR) and discussed the ALIGN Project. She also shared ecological implications for project phases, including project identification, project

appraisal, project tender, and the award and contract management phase.

Her presentation was well received, and there was active discussion afterwards. The participants enquired about the availability of wildlife or animal movement information in India. Dr. Solanki explained that although the accessibility of a GIS layer of protected area and wildlife availability is limited in the public domain, the published reports are regularly released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.



Dr. Ridhima Solanki presenting the ALIGN Project in the seminar

Delegates expressed concern that overpasses, which are prevalent in some countries, may not be as common or suitable for the landscapes inhabited by elephants in

India. This raises questions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of such structures in addressing the specific challenges faced by elephants in the country. Dr. Solanki made it clear to the delegates that underpasses are becoming the prevalent solution in road development in India as well, owing to the landscape context that better accommodates the movement patterns of elephants. This underscores the significance of aligning infrastructure strategies with the unique environmental conditions and wildlife behaviors in the region.



Dr. Solanki and panelists at the CEAI seminar

Participation in this seminar was fruitful, as it provided an opportunity to share the ALIGN Project and how it relates to a wide range of stakeholders. Also present were representatives from various government bodies such as the National Highways Authority of India and National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited. Research institutes connected with roads and bridges, surveys, and investigation agencies and members of the private sector also attended the session.

The ALIGN Project will collaborate with FIDIC and CEAI to develop a course module and training session for consulting engineers. With this objective, the partnership between ALIGN, WWF-India, and CEAI looks promising. ■ *To learn more about the ALIGN Project, visit [alignproject.org](https://alignproject.org).*

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