



SAARC  
SAARC Development Fund



Afghanistan



Bangladesh



Bhutan



India



Maldives



Nepal



Pakistan



Sri Lanka

# SAARC Development Fund

SDF Newsletter, Second Quarter of 2023  
April-June



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Greetings from SAARC Development Fund!

Welcome to our newsletter for the second quarter of 2023. SDF, as an umbrella regional financial institution for SAARC projects and programs, is fully committed to promote "Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation among the SAARC Member States" through project funding and collaboration".

To realize our mission, we at SAARC Development Fund continue to undertake a number of initiatives for the strategic growth of the region, funding regional projects, forging partnerships and initiating numerous interventions to enable SDF to become a more dynamic and robust umbrella-funding institution, amply capable of delivering the benefits of regional engagement to the millions in the region through project-based collaboration.

SDF operates through the three financing windows: Social, Economic and Infrastructure and have about 100 projects. This newsletter highlights SDF's continued commitment towards promoting the welfare of the people of SAARC Region, improving their quality of life, accelerating economic growth and social progress, and alleviating poverty through financing and implementation of development projects in all the Member States.

Partnership makes everything we do possible. We wish to acknowledge the enormous contribution of all our partners for working together with us to achieve sustainable results through our projects in the Member States. Thank you and happy reading!



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# SDF Counterpart Agencies visit the COVID project site in Kandy, Sri Lanka



Kandy, Sri Lanka, 6 April 2023 – SDF Counterpart Agencies from the Member States met in Sri Lanka for the Eighth Counterpart Agencies Meeting of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) and carried out a site visit to Kandy, Sri Lanka.

SDF has provided a grant of USD 1.2 million to Sri Lanka from its USD 7.7 million grant for COVID-19 projects in the SAARC Member States to support the building of an Isolation Ward Complex at the National Hospital in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The Isolation Ward will have 23 isolation rooms, ward areas, rooms and stations for the medical staff. According to officials, this unit will be the apex centre to treat infectious diseases like COVID for central province and nearby 5 provinces.

This is because National Hospital Kandy is the second largest Hospital in Sri Lanka and is the major tertiary care unit in the Central Province. The hospital also caters the adjoining provinces such as Sabaragamuwa, Northern, Eastern, North Central and North Western. Currently about 100 Medical consultants and 900 medical officers are attached to the hospital.

SDF Counterpart Agencies are the focal points nominated by the Finance Ministry of the respective Member States in order to coordinate and facilitate on behalf of SDF.

The site visit was held to review the status of the ongoing SDF project, and discuss the progress and challenges faced in the implementation of these projects.





## Assessing the benefits & challenges of the Bamboo Project in Bhutan

Zhemgang, Bhutan, 31 May 2023 - Bamboo constitutes a significant portion of the total forest area in the region. That is why SDF works with partners across the Member States through its project on promoting bamboo-based enterprises for income generation and employment opportunities.

On 31 May 2023, the SDF team met with the members of the Bamboo Community Facility Centre (CFC) in remote Bjoka gewog located in Bhutan's Zhemgang District.

Zhemgang is at the heart of Bhutan's bamboo weaving craft and tradition. In fact, people from Bjoka are known as the pioneers of craftsmanship in bamboo basketry and other bamboo products.

The community members oriented the team on the ongoing activities and the benefits reaped from the SDF-funded project, which has supported infrastructure, hands-on trainings and various equipment. The members also shared some of the major challenges and held discussions with the team on the way forward to address those challenges.

Community members in Bjoka learn how to make bamboo products such as containers by age 5-6. They said that the trainings and equipment through the SDF project has helped them increase the production, reduce processing

time and has overall helped increase the value and prices of their bamboo products by many folds.

In Bhutan, the SDF project - Promoting Integrated Bamboo-Based Enterprise Development among SAARC Countries – is implemented by the Tarayana Foundation .



*A Community Facility Centre (CFC) built with SDF support, which benefits to over 180 households*



*Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GUQNWyz9yA>*



# Launching of the 'Bhutan TSHAR Institute' to support bamboo artisans



10 June 2023 – Bhutan's Queen Mother Her Majesty Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck virtually inaugurated the 'Bhutan TSHAR Institute' in Kalapang Gewog of Bhutan's eastern Mongar district on 10 June 2023 in the presence of the SAARC Development Fund officials and the rural community representatives from the center.

The institute has been established by Tarayana Foundation as part of the SDF project "Promoting Integrated Bamboo-Based Enterprises Development among SAARC Countries." The institute has been funded by the SAARC Development Fund and it aims to provide livelihood opportunities for bamboo artisans, farmers, youth, and the rural communities in Bhutan.

Bhutan is home to 34 bamboo species. It plays an important part in the life and livelihood of certain sections of the people in Bhutan.

The institute aims to contribute in the fields of capacity development of artisans, lead product design and development, introduce quality standards and help certify

skill levels and competencies and serve as a nodal agency for bamboo research and development. A well-equipped Institute, staffed with a team of knowledgeable, motivated and skilled trainers and machine operators will help promote the bamboo industry in general and research and innovation for the better utilization of this 'green gold' in particular. According to Tarayana officials, the Institute will contribute significantly to nation building by promoting enterprises, generating employment opportunities and bringing global standards to its service and products.

The institute will offer training and employment opportunities in the bamboo industry, with a focus on youth, women, artisans, farmers and tradespeople. It will help in skills development and provide raw materials, design assistance and market access for bamboo handicrafts, lifestyle products and packaging industry. The institute will also work towards introducing architects, designers, builders and planners to working with bamboo as a viable alternate structural material and promote bamboo harvesting and manufacturing in an ecologically safe manner.

## Strengthening systems and setting up Toll-Free Helplines for Women and Children



Colombo, Sri Lanka – The helpline 1929 – Children's Helpline and 1938 Women's Helpline – were set up with funding from SAARC Development Fund to address complaints regarding all forms of discrimination and abuse against women and children, through referrals to legal, counselling, and access to shelter facilities.

The 1938 helpline initially worked only eight hours per day. However, COVID-19 worsened the situation. According to reports, women and children are more likely to experience violence within the four walls of their homes due to movement restrictions imposed during lockdowns. This was evident from the rising numbers. The complaints received by the helpline significantly increased following the Covid-19-related lockdowns and restrictions. The recorded cases on the 1938 hotline increased to 3,771 in 2020 from just 1,806 in 2019 and 1,337 in 2018. Similarly, the 1929 child helpline also saw a drastic increase in the number of cases.



"With the financial and technical assistance from SAARC Development Fund, we were able to expand the helpline to 24/7," said the Director at the Ministry of Women and Child Department in Sri Lanka, Ms. Iresha N Dharmasena. "In April 2020 alone, about 460 complaints of violence were lodged at the 1939 helpline."

She said that the trilingual 24-hour hotlines and digital application today provide psychosocial, legal and shelter support for survivors across the country.

Together with partners, SDF is committed towards ensuring women and children's access to support, health care, psychosocial services, legal aid and safe spaces through this project!



*Video: <https://youtu.be/LkfDqk5OpIU>*



## ECONOMIC & INFRASTRUCTURE WINDOW HIGHLIGHTS

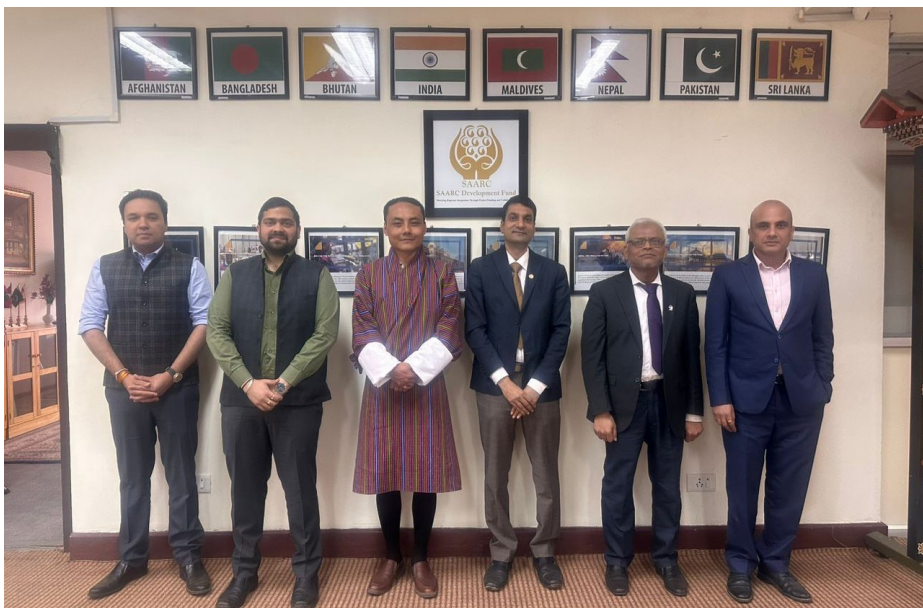
The Economic & Infrastructure (E&I) Windows of the fund provides loans for financing both sovereign and non-sovereign projects in the SAARC Member States. The mandate of the E&I windows is to finance economic and infrastructure projects in the member states with direct benefit going to at least 2 member states. The lending is guided by the SDF Board-approved Credit policy and E&I policy guidelines.

### Exploring new Economic & Infrastructure Projects

SDF's E&I team continues to strategize in order to garner sound bankable projects and have initiated meetings and field missions to build and strengthen partnership with several relevant organizations and partners. The team continued with their discussions with various partners, particularly in India, during the first quarter of this year:



13 April 2023 - SDF's Economic & Infrastructure team met with the CEO and team from Azista Bhutan Healthcare Ltd. at the SDF Secretariat in Thimphu Bhutan. Azista is a Joint Venture Company of Azista, India and Druk Holding and Investments Ltd, Bhutan. The two teams discussed regarding the expansion project of Azista.



25 April 2022 - SDF Economic and Infrastructure team met with the representatives from the WAPCOS Ltd. at the SDF Secretariat in Thimphu Bhutan to discuss engagement in future projects of SDF.





30 May 2023 - It was an honour to welcome His Excellency the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Bhutan, Mr Shib Nath Roy, to the SDF Secretariat this week. SDF team led by Officer-In-Charge, Mr Satya S Saswat and H.E. Ambassador Roy discussed SDF's ongoing efforts in the Member States, and the prospect of funding marine transportation project in Bangladesh.

## MEETING AND EVENTS



## World Environment Day

5 June 2023 - Small changes can make a big difference! On World Environment Day, the SAARC Development Fund Secretariat joined the global movement for a greener tomorrow by organizing a cleaning campaign.





# Who we are?



SAARC Development Fund Secretariat was established in April 2010 by the heads of the eight member countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Our mandate is to promote the welfare of the people of SAARC region, to improve their quality of life, to accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the region and to contribute to "Regional Cooperation and Integration through Project Collaboration".

SDF manages projects in all the SAARC Member States under its three investment Windows: Social, Economic and Infrastructure Windows. For details, Visit Website: [www.sdfsec.org](http://www.sdfsec.org)



Towards Regional Integration and Economic  
Cooperation Through Project Funding

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