

Comments on the JICA Examiner's report

We, the residents of Ward no. 2 of Chandragiri municipality, were happy with the construction of the Nagdhunga-Sisnekhola Tunnel considered as project of national priority and we also welcomed the project. As the construction of the tunnel progressed, the drinking water sources that we used for generations dried up, houses developed cracks, the streams, rivulets and wells that we used for irrigation dried up, land developed cracks, landfalls occurred due to blasting. Then, we repeatedly raised our issues with the project and concerned agencies to resolve our problems. But there was no resolution to our problems even after frequent discussions and dialogues where we were provided assurances for resolution of our problems.

The decision made at the ministerial-level meeting of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport of the Government of Nepal on 20 November 2024 that was presented to the Cabinet of Ministers clearly identifies different gaps. It was recognized that since this is the first tunnel construction project of the Government of Nepal, lack of experience and need for formulation of law for resolution of problems resulted due to tunnel construction. In this context, it is questionable if the project escapes from its responsibility by pointing to the MOU between Chandragiri Municipality and the project [regarding drinking water project]. On one hand, while there is acknowledgement for lack of experience of the Government of Nepal for tunnel construction and need for relevant laws, there is however no progress in resolution of our problems. That makes us, the affected people, feel that the State is discriminatory towards us. Thus, we trust that there will be decisive role of JICA for the resolution of the problems of the affected people.

[However], when we read the report of the Examiners prepared after their investigation, they have not been able to clearly state that the problems resulting from the tunnel construction should be resolved. Thus, we still call for necessary actions to resolve the problems resulting from the tunnel construction.

- 1) For operationalizing the drinking water project, procedures should be put in place to allocate certain percentage of the entry fee (tax) collected during operating the tunnel. For that, there should be a policy-level decision – that the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport has acknowledged.
- 2) Regarding the water lifting project, an understanding is first needed between Chandragiri municipality and Dhunibeshi municipality. Thus, the project or the concerned ministry should coordinate for such agreement. Then, necessary budget should be ensured for the project.
- 3) Regarding the houses that developed cracks, 95 households that were identified in the first phase have received compensation or are in the process of receiving compensation. Now, the applications that were submitted later should be investigated and compensation should be ensured for those households that should get compensation.
- 4) Other matters of employment, supplementary plans (projects), repairs of machine (of the drinking water project) can be resolved through discussions.