Regular updates on the status of the new WHO South-East Asia Regional Office Building at Indraprastha Estate in New Delhi, India, have been presented to the Regional Committee since its Sixty-eighth session in Dili, Timor-Leste, September 2015.

Following Decision SEA/RC70(2) of the Seventieth session of the Regional Committee in Maldives in September 2017, the Regional Committee decided to redevelop the whole campus as the best means to manage the ramified structural issues involved.

Having secured excellent cooperation from and substantive contributions extended by the host country to finance and manage the demolition and reconstruction of a new building at the site, the Regional Office relocated to two temporary swing spaces in central Delhi from 14 May 2018 in a smoothly executed transition. The old Regional Office Building was evacuated in July 2018.

This Working Paper provides updates on progress made since the last Regional Committee with a focus on the state of the construction work of the new Regional Office, including project timelines, challenges and third-party quality assurance.

The Secretariat has been working closely with the Government of India on the execution of the reconstruction project. Regular dialogue between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India and the WHO South-East Asia Region towards a successful completion of the project within the agreed timelines is ongoing.

As per contractual timelines with the general contractor, the overall project deadline for completion of all building activities has been extended from the initial targeted completion date of July 2023 to March 2024. However, this timeline has not yet been evaluated following the largescale flooding of the site and adjoining areas in July 2023 and its consequent impact on the progress of work.

This Working Paper was presented to the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for its review and recommendations. The HLP Meeting reviewed the paper and made the following recommendation for consideration by the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee:

**Action by WHO**

(1) Provide the latest updates on the SE Asia Regional Office Building reconstruction project to the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee in October 2023.

This Working Paper and the HLP Meeting recommendation are submitted to the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia for its consideration.
Introduction

1. During its Sixty-eighth session in Dili, Timor-Leste, in September 2015, the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia reviewed and noted the preliminary report on the status of the South-East Asia Regional Office Building located on Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi, India.


3. Comprehensive technical studies on the structural status of the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office Building were presented to the Sixty-ninth session of the Regional Committee in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in September 2016. Vide its Decision SEA/RC69(3), the Regional Committee requested the Regional Office to proceed to move to temporary premises and finalize a sustainably funded reconstruction strategy for a new Regional Office Building, urging Member States to contribute substantially to the initiative. Pledges for contribution to the new building construction were made by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste, and that cumulatively amounted to US$ 1.34 million.

4. A detailed business case report outlining the requirements and risk assessment of three available options were presented to the Seventieth session of the Committee in Maldives in September 2017. The three options were:
   - refurbishment of the existing campus,
   - redevelopment of the whole campus,
   - part redevelopment and part refurbishment of the existing campus.

5. The Regional Committee Decision SEA/RC70(2) called for “Redevelopment of the whole campus” at an estimated cost of US$ 55.89 million, with WHO covering the cost of the relocation of all staff to temporary premises for a period of up to five years amounting to about US$ 20.49 million. The Committee expressed profound appreciation of the Government of India for its continued generosity in hosting the Regional Office for South-East Asia in New Delhi, including its consenting to finance and manage the construction of the new Regional Office Building to the tune of approximately US$ 35.4 million or Indian Rupee 2280 million.

6. The Regional Office shifted to a temporary location on 14 May 2018. Vide its letter dated 14 December 2017, MoH&FW appointed the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) Limited as the project management consultancy agency for the reconstruction. After a competitive bidding process, Achal Kataria Architects were appointed by NBCC to finalize the designs and concept plan for the new building. A tripartite agreement between the Ministry of Health, the WHO South-East Asia Region and NBCC (India) Ltd. was signed on 8 January 2019.

7. Enumerated hereinafter is the sequence of events since the discussions on this Agenda item at the Seventy-fifth session of the Regional Committee in Paro, Bhutan, September 2022.
The new WHO SE Asia Regional Office Building

A building belonging to the Region and built for the future

8. The new building that will house the Regional Office – referred to as World Health House – marks the culmination of evolving modern trends and architectural developments and processes that SEARO has incorporated in ways that can positively impact the health of its staff. The new and iconic Regional Office will have a conspicuous and meaningful presence on the urban mindscape of Delhi and reflect the overarching organizational values of WHO. Its design and articulation is rooted in the cultural, social and technological tapestry of the progressive and aspiring Member States of South-East Asia.

9. The building first and foremost will be climate-responsive, keeping in mind the weather conditions of Delhi. The building’s climatic “envelope” will keep the “heat gain” at a minimum creating an environment within that is comfortable for work during the day. Elements of nature will be part of the ethos with a kaleidoscope of outdoor and indoor gardens and green zones. These will act as breakaway spaces within the work environment to create a feeling of “well-being”. Rainwater will be harvested, solar panels and the latest technologies and services used to create a sustainable, energy-efficient building. Work environments will be flexible in nature and designed to encourage teamwork and holistic collaboration.

A green World Health House

10. The new World Health House is being designed as a state-of-the-art green premise. It has incorporated in its design all the sound principles of energy conservation, recycling of waste and greening of available spaces, among others. The building aims to obtain a Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) of 5, which is the highest grade and equivalent to LEED Platinum. Green buildings are often designed with only a few basic parameters in mind such as water conservation or reduced energy consumption. Green rating systems incorporate almost every aspect of design and construction. All the participants in the construction process, such as the architect, electrical consultant, landscape designer and contractors, are working together to ensure that the impact on the environment is minimal.

Project entities involved with MoH&FW

11. The Government of India, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in particular, continue to make all efforts to ensure that the building project is completed in the possible timeframe.

12. NBCC is a public, blue chip enterprise under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. It has carried out all competitive bidding processes, contracts with architects and engineers, and allocated the different work packages to duly qualified companies, to ensure robust onsite project management monitoring and quality control over all contracts.
13. The architectural design was awarded, after competitive bidding, to Achal Kataria Architects (AKA) by NBCC. Following a joint review of the technical details of the tender documents between WHO, NBCC and the architects, the construction work was awarded to Parnika Commercial & Estates Pvt Ltd after bidding. A comprehensive EPC (engineering procurement construction) contract was signed on 8 May 2019.

14. The NBCC took possession of the site from WHO on 18 January 2019 subsequent to signing of the tripartite agreement. In addition, a bilateral agreement was signed between the Ministry of Health and NBCC (India) Ltd that agreed on the scope of the consultant’s responsibilities, implementation, timelines and payment terms.

**Building design**

15. NBCC obtained all approvals for the scope of work, technical specifications, drawings and environmental permissions required for the reconstruction project. AKA completed the major designs involving structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, and laying of active/passive cables.

16. WHO continues to work closely with the architect’s team while enunciating clearly its requirements, including the associated scope of works involving modular furniture, information and audiovisual technologies, kitchen and pantry equipment, and the safety and security mechanisms.

17. Subsequent to signing the tripartite agreement, WHO has requested the architect’s team to identify and recommend pandemic/virus mitigation measures that can be incorporated in the building, such as touchless solutions and sensors for elevators, doors and water closets. Additional cost estimates for these identified pandemic prevention measures have been submitted by NBCC and accepted by MoHFW for inclusion in the building.

**Project quality control**

18. The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Patna, India, has been chosen as third-party quality audit (TPQA) agent to obtain regular and independent technical quality assessments for civil, electrical, mechanical and all other allied construction works. NIT Patna is a reputed educational institution with an experienced and qualified team of engineers.

19. Since June 2021, NIT personnel have visited the building site monthly and conducted fourteen quality assurance audits in total. By and large, the construction works are being properly carried out, including adequate testing of construction material.

20. The Project Monitoring Consultant, Cushman and Wakefield, under a contractual agreement with the Regional Office submits to the WHO a monthly project progress, quality compliance and site safety reports.
Preservation of heritage artwork

21. The contract for restoration and preservation of selected pieces of heritage art in the Regional Office, which had been extricated from the building for preservation and re-installation, was awarded to the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) by NBCC.

22. The rare and iconic wall murals/paintings by the acclaimed artist M.F. Husain as painted on the upper two concrete walls of the main conference room of the former Regional Office, a gift to WHO from the Government of India, were physically removed by and held in a secured storage facility by art restoration experts from the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). INTACH also removed and stored the Portuguese ceramic tiled historical and architectural mural artworks from the Goa Room of the old building, a gift from Portugal, formerly an Associate Member of the Region. INTACH is exclusively contracted by NBCC for the removal/packaging, restoration, conservation and reinstallation of the artworks. These paintings were removed from the former conference room using a state-of-the-art technique by cutting them from walls in situ as 10 separate concrete panels weighing approximately 40 tons. The M.F. Husain mural and a painting by him on Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa of Calcutta were given an insurable value of approximately US$ 2.36 million in 2018.

23. As of the second week of September 2023, 10 out of the 10 mural panels were successfully placed by INTACH in the reception area of the new office building—Delicate conservation work will be undertaken by INTACH as the building project nears completion. The location for reinstallation of the Portuguese tiles is yet to be decided.

Project entities established for monitoring

Project Monitoring Committee (PMC)

24. As mandated by the tripartite agreement, a Project Management Committee (PMC) chaired by the Regional Director, and the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Director (Commercial), NBCC, as Members, was constituted. It meets at monthly intervals to review the construction according to the agreed terms and conditions.

Building Committee

25. A Building Committee was constituted to update the Regional Director on key issues. It is chaired by the Director of Programme Management, and members include the WHO Representative to India, SEARO Directors, and representatives of the Staff Association, Regional Medical Services, the staff community and the project management team.

26. The Building Committee has been providing guidance and inputs to the architect for the design of the new Regional Office Building and providing advice on options for workspace standards (including office furniture design) and space allocation. The committee has also been entrusted to review and provide guidance on and analysis of the implementation on the next relocation exercise on office space planning, communications and change management for the move to the new building.
27. In addition, various in-house subcommittees were formed by WHO-SEARO in January 2022 with the involvement of Department Directors, senior staff members and Staff Association representatives for better monitoring of the redevelopment project in coordination with NBCC, to monitor specific areas of work, such as audiovisual and information technology, interiors and decor, office seating layouts, landscaping, water and waste management, parking provisions, procurement of office furniture and material, etc.

**Construction Project Monitoring Consultancy**

28. To assist with the review of construction quality and scheduling, an outsourced Project Monitoring Consultancy company, Cushman & Wakefield, was appointed by WHO-SEARO in May 2022 to work closely with NBCC and other stakeholders onsite and report to WHO on a weekly basis.

**Current project timelines, response and challenges**

29. As per contractual timelines with Parnika Commercial & Estates Pvt Ltd, the General Contractor, the overall project timelines for full completion of all building activities have been extended from the initial targeted completion date of July 2023 to March 2024. However, this timeline has not been evaluated after the largescale flooding of the site and adjoining areas in July 2023. The agencies concerned are working to make up for the delays incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, recurrent floods, and other challenges indicated herein, and are updating the Project Management Committee on a monthly basis.

30. The progress made since September 2022 is enumerated hereinafter:

- The building structures of Tower “W” (11 Floors), Tower “H” (13 floors) have been completed.
- The civil works for Tower “W” have been completed along with stone flooring for all floors. The aluminum window framing works is completed for two sides of the building façade and the installation of façade glass is completed except for the openable windows (ca. 20% of windows).
- For Tower “H”, civil works have been completed along with installation of stone flooring completed up to the 10th floor.
- Installation of electrical conducting, raceways cable trays, HVAC ducting, plumbing piping, fire-fighting pipes, fire alarms and the public address system are underway for Towers “W” and ‘H’.
- However, the third Tower “O” has long been an engineering construction challenge at the basement level due to porous soil conditions resulting from past flooding and heavy rains. One solution to this challenge was estimated to install vertical pile foundations that are extended into the earth to keep the structure of Tower “O” stable. This solution led to the loss of a large amount floor space for the third and second basements of Tower “O”. The structure up to the 4th floor has been completed by mid-September 2023.
• New connections for electricity, water and other utilities have been applied for with the Delhi civic authorities concerned. A security deposit for the new electricity connection has been provided to the electricity utility, BSES, by WHO.

31. There were multiple recent challenges that have further impeded the progress of construction. These include:

• Due to the alarming levels of air pollution in Delhi, total ban on construction activities were imposed in several spells by the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi from October 2022, impeding the pace of the construction intermittently.

• In July 2023, due to the second major flooding episode in Delhi in the nearly three years since the pandemic outbreak, with the adjoining Yamuna River being in space, all the three basements of the WHO Building were completely inundated along with the nearby areas and neighbouring roads. The previous such major flooding event of the basements occurred in July 2020. During the latest flooding episode, the water could not be pumped out of the basement caverns for several days. The impact of and possible damage from this flooding on the installed mechanical and electrical systems and the structural stability of the premises and their foundations continue to be examined, and there is the apprehension of consequent further delays in construction work.

• Regular meetings of the Project Monitoring Committee (PMC) are conducted with the participation of all stakeholders, NBCC, Parnika, MoH&FW, WHO Senior Management to resolve the various construction challenges.

The way forward

32. NBCC has assured the SEARO project subcommittees that all efforts will be undertaken to hand over the completed building by March 2024. However, this timeline has not yet been evaluated following the largescale flooding of the site and adjoining areas in July 2023 and its consequent impact on the progress of work. In addition, regular meetings with subcommittees, the Building Committee and PMC, with the involvement of WHO Senior Management, officials of the MoH&FW and other stakeholders, have been taking place to review progress.

33. Due to the extensive flooding event across Delhi in July 2023, major mechanical, electrical and building support services and equipment were adversely affected.

34. Continued review meetings of the Project Monitoring Committee of WHO with NBCC, the architects and the construction contractor and other stakeholders have resulted in a regular and active collaborative process which empathizes with WHO’s evolving requirements and aspirations, including the added pandemic-preventive infrastructure and cost-saving needs. A decision has been taken to reuse existing office furniture and equipment wherever possible.

35. WHO continues to stipulate requirements and finalize the scope of work related to the art and decor, modular furniture, information and audiovisual technology equipment, kitchen components and paraphernalia, and safety and security infrastructure, seating layouts, parking, and other amenities in the new Building.
36. The Secretariat continues to work closely with MoHFW to make this project a success and remains committed to report on its progress to the Regional Committee each year.

37. With reference to the Regional Committee Decision SEA/RC69(3) on a sustainably funded reconstruction strategy for the Regional Office, the Secretariat urges all Member States to consider pledging funds, which will be critical to enable specific elements of the project to be completed within the preferred timelines while ensuring that the project is reflective of WHO’s unique work milieu and representative and inclusive mandate.

38. The Regional Committee is requested to take note of the Working Paper and the latest updates on the SE Asia Regional Office Building reconstruction project.