

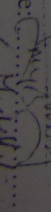
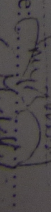
# 548111024: MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
KEYWORDS: POLICY DEBATE, POVERTY REDUCTION, ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION, NGOS, BHUTAN, LHUNTSE DISTRICT, SHINGKHAR GORGAN ROAD  
TASHI PENJOR, B.A: THE POLICY DEBATE BETWEEN POVERTY REDUCTION  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN BHUTAN: A CASE STUDY OF  
SHINGKHAR-GORGAN ROAD IN LHUNTSE DISTRICT.  
CARL NIGEL MIDDLETON, Ph.D., 101 pp.

Lhunste is one of the least developed districts in the eastern part of Bhutan with 43% of population below poverty line. The elected government decided to construct the Shinghar-Gorgan road which passes through Thrumshingla National Park (TNP) to reduce poverty. However, the country's existing laws and policies prohibit roads passing through national parks and protected areas. Therefore, NGOs and other concerned stakeholders have raised concerns towards the government's decision. This thesis examines the competing policy priorities between poverty reduction and environmental protection in Bhutan in which the Shinghar-Gorgan road is being debated and acted upon by various concerned stakeholders. The information used in the study was collected from two main sources: documentary research; and in-depth focus-group and individual interviews with key informants, including two environmental NGOs, two government stakeholders responsible for environmental protection, a Member of Parliament, and informants from Lhunste District it includes Jarey, Meisho and Menbi Gups (local leaders) and residents in Gorgan.

The study finds that local governance participation in the decision making process is stronger and face lesser challenges compare to the national level due to NGOs' intervention. In addition, the study finds that poverty in the eastern part of Bhutan is greater compared to the western area of Bhutan. At the same time, the current environmental condition throughout Bhutan is still good, while the case study area had not been under threat until the road project was proposed. The main debate has arisen as the proposed road, promoted for poverty reduction, violates the Forest and Conservation Act 1995 and Environment Protection Act 2007, which prohibit infrastructure construction in Protected Areas to conserve the environment.

Stakeholders in support of the road, including the local and national government, and stakeholders opposing the road, in particular the environmental NGOs, after a period of disagreement agreed to compromise on a joint Environmental Impact Assessment. Building on this, the study recommends that these stakeholders at local and national levels should cooperate and discuss with one another to establish measures and strategies that meet both environmental conservation goals and poverty reduction goals as well as promote fair and transparent decision making.

Field of Study: International Development Studies.....  
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Student's Signature: .....  
Advisor's Signature: .....