

Empowering Communities for Road Safety in Nepal: An Approach to community engagement and Advocacy.

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Background: Since 2017, Nepal has implemented a devolved system of government with 7 Provincial and 753 Local governments (known as Palikas). Palikas now have both the funding and the authority to oversee local roads and manage transportation infrastructures within their jurisdictions.

Objectives: Through the mobilisation of communities in 8 palikas of Bagmati province, the project aims to improve road safety by applying an approach that enables communities to advocate for a change in their palikas.

Programme Description: Four community road safety mobilisers (CRSMs) have been employed and trained to work with communities in the 8 palikas, empowering them to contribute to activities and advocate for local road traffic injury prevention. This approach promotes collaboration to enhance road safety and involvement of grassroots organisations. With the help of the CRSMs, communities are enabled to form Community Road Safety Forums, whose role is to gather local perspectives and inform palika leaders regarding road safety decisions. Quarterly meetings, using participatory learning and action methods, have been planned for the next three years to hone ideas around road safety challenges and possible solutions. The costs of the CRSF meetings are provided and annual evaluations will assess the impact of CRSF activities on local decision making.

Outcomes and Learning: We have developed a framework for activities, recruited and trained the CRSMs, obtained authorisation from the mayors of the eight selected palikas, formed community road safety forums and developed meeting guides. Convincing local leadership for historically neglected issues is challenging and time consuming. Formation of a Local Road Safety Committee in each of the selected Palikas is anticipated at the end of the process.

Implications: From our learning we will co-produce a toolkit for all palikas in Nepal that describes how this approach to community level advocacy for road safety can be established.

Conclusions: Our experience has confirmed our expectation that at local government level in Nepal there is little awareness of the issues that could be addressed to make local roads safer. Our approach has the potential to enable community level advocacy for local government action.