

Enforcement and Community Education – The Golden Keys to Road Safety – A Developing Nation Case Study of Cambodia

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Abstract

This study reviews road trauma in the Kingdom of Cambodia and the concerted endeavours to implement road safety strategies through enhanced enforcement combined with specific education and community programs. The political, socio-economic and cultural issues are considered together with the impact of elections, demonstrations, festivals and floods, as impediments to effective campaigns. The commitment of champions, donor organisations, development of coordination bodies, intensive campaigns, capacity building in policing, improved technology and enhanced operational police practices are reviewed. Acknowledgement of challenges and persistence in approach together with monitoring and evaluation has led to positive outcomes and a foundation for future success.

Background

Road crashes have emerged as a modern humanitarian catastrophe affecting individuals, families, communities and the nation. Many families have been driven deeply into poverty by the loss of breadwinners and the added burden of caring for disabled family members. Moreover, it is the youth of Cambodia who are most severely affected by this tragedy, robbing families of their next generation.

By recognizing this catastrophe, the government established the National Road Safety Committee (NRSC) in 2005 as the coordinating body with high level representatives from 18 ministries. The Road Crash and Victim Information System (RCVIS) has been progressively developed since 2004, as the road trauma data source providing a strong evidence-base for road safety reform.

The 2013 annual RCVIS Report, recorded 4,353 crashes and 16,227 casualties – 1950 fatalities and 5,671 serious injuries. The economic loss was claimed as USD \$337 million. Disturbingly, vulnerable road users such as bicyclists, motorbike riders and passengers, motorised tricycles and pedestrians accounted for almost 90% of casualties. The fatality rate per 100,000 populations was (13.0).

Via donor organisations and technical assistance from Handicap International (HI) the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), AIP Foundation, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Alliance of Responsible Drinking (IARD), the country stakeholders and decision-makers have been able to develop critical action plans to prevent and reduce road crashes.

These international consortium partners have worked collaboratively with responsible ministries and stakeholders focusing on risk factors, capacity building, enhanced enforcement, advocacy, policy and legislative reform, improvement of the road crash data system, development of national road safety strategies, action plans, guidelines and operating procedures, conducting social marketing campaigns, and promoting government ownership on project coordination and collaboration.

Method

The study uses a mixed method approach including research, analysis and trends of crash data, reviews of critical evaluations, participant observation, interviews with key stakeholders, news reports, focus group discussions, assessment of police workloads and responsibilities, as well as recognizing compounding factors of increases in the vehicle fleet and driver numbers.

Results

The study identified critical issues of impact during the strategic process of capacity building. These include the political environment (pre-election, election and post-election) resulting in enforcement restrictions, non-enforcement, as well as the drain on police resources with national demonstrations, natural disasters (floods) and festivals. The imperative of sustained road policing, enforcement and education campaigns is highlighted through the overlay of these impediments on the crash data. Existing community programs have notably been strengthened together with the establishment of new coordination bodies such as 'CamSafe' and its youth programs combine to provide a solid foundation upon which Cambodia Road Safety Reform can mature.

Conclusions

The direct correlation between enforcement and education and road trauma reduction is reinforced in the findings from this study. Conversely, reduced enforcement, non-enforcement and the lack of focus on road safety education has a neutral and at times negative impact on road safety. The importance of political support, community initiative and involvement is identified as paramount to the success of road safety reform.

References

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