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Strengthening Local Road Safety Capacity in Cambodia

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Abstract

Road crashes and injuries have become a growing issue worldwide. In 2011, more than 75,000 people died in road crashes in the ten member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many times this number sustained long term injuries. In 2014, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, commenced a package of actions to improve road safety in ASEAN. In 2015, as part of the technical assistance for this project, a Road Safety Advisor was appointed for Cambodia for four months. The assignment produced several primary outputs, which included the organization of national training on traffic law enforcement and road safety management, the conduct of a training needs survey and cost analysis study, and the development of a proposal for strengthening speed management. It is important to note that unlike other ADB technical assistance projects, this assignment adopted a capacity building approach, which promoted and encouraged the local road safety team in the government to step up and take action. The research capacity building approach adopted in this project highlighted the feasibility of increasing participation from existing stakeholders, especially the government in identifying existing human resources, building the capacity of relevant government officials and supporting them to take the ownership of the project. It is hoped that similar outcomes will occur in the other ASEAN countries.

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to highlight the feasibility of strengthening local road safety participation in identifying existing human resources, building the capacity of relevant government officials and supporting them to take the ownership of a road safety project.

Road Safety in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Road crashes and injuries have become a growing issue worldwide, as evidenced by the publication of World Health Organisation reports in 2004, 2009 and 2013, and the launch of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety in 2011 (WHO, 2004, 2009, 2013). Every year, around the world, 1.24 million people die due to road traffic injuries in addition to 20-50 million non-fatal injuries occurring (WHO, 2013). In 2011, more than 75,000 people died in road crashes in the ten member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many times this number sustained long term injuries.

Following the first initiative in 2004 to develop the ASEAN Road Safety Regional Action Plan and an of need for a more comprehensive and effective intervention, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, commenced a package of actions to improve road safety in ASEAN. This technical assistance aimed to strengthen the capacity of governments in addressing national and regional road safety issues in the ASEAN. It delivered six main outputs, which were: (i) strengthened capacity to monitor and analyse road accident data, (ii) strengthened capacity to implement road safety strategies, (iii) strengthened capacity to address motorcycle safety issues, (iv) improved enforcement capacity of traffic police, (v) a pipeline of road safety projects, and (vi) knowledge products disseminated publicly.

44 Road Safety in Cambodia

45 Cambodia is one of the ten countries to benefit from this technical assistance. The country is located
46 in the southwest of the Indochinese peninsula, bordered by Vietnam to the east, Lao PDR to the
47 north, and Thailand to the west. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, being ranked 136th
48 out of 187 countries in the UN's Human Development Index and 20.5% of the population live
49 below the national poverty line (*Human Development Index*, 2014)

50 The numbers of road fatalities have been increasing every year since 2006, when 1,292 were
51 recorded. In 2013, the National Road Safety Committee reported 1,950 fatalities and 14,277
52 injuries. With a total population of 14.67 million (an increase of 13% between 2005 and 2013), the
53 fatality rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Cambodia was 13.2, compared with 10.2 in Vietnam and
54 13.4 in Lao PDR (National Road Safety Committee, 2014).

55 In 2013, road crashes led to an annual economic cost of USD 337M, equivalent to 2.1% of the gross
56 domestic product (National Road Safety Committee, 2014). The crashes affected mostly young road
57 users and especially students, workers and farmers, who play important roles in the country's
58 economic development (National Road Safety Committee, 2012).

59 The findings from the data analysis also indicated that road crashes tend to impact on poorer
60 communities more, those who were pedestrians or travelled on motorbikes and bicycles, and those
61 living in rural areas. Speed was reported as a major human error factor that is responsible for more
62 than half of the fatalities and long term injuries.

63 Road safety as a concept was brought into Cambodia and introduced to the Cambodian government
64 through a small project initiated by Handicap International in 2002 and the Regional Road Safety
65 Program, supported by the Asian Development Bank in 2003. In 2005, the government approved
66 the first 2005-2010 National Road Safety Action Plan, which aimed to prevent road crashes and
67 promote safer behaviours among road users. This national plan was developed based on the ADB
68 regional strategy. Two years later, the National Road Safety Committee was established with the
69 specific task of coordinating and implementing the national plan. By the end of 2010, some
70 important results in nine out of all fifteen actions were partially achieved:

- 71 • Action 1: Establishment of a National Road Safety Committee: was set up in 2007
- 72 • Action 2: Road Accident Data Systems: a Road Crash and Victim Information System
- 73 (RCVIS) was initiated and implemented with a nationwide coverage in 2006
- 74 • Action 6: Road Safety Education for Children: primary and secondary school curricula on
- 75 road safety were developed and extended to selected provinces
- 76 • Action 7: Traffic Law and Regulations: the traffic law was updated and approved by the
- 77 government in 2006.
- 78 • Action 8: Law Enforcement: enforcement training courses were conducted and enforcement
- 79 operations by traffic police teams were undertaken on helmet and drink driving in Phnom
- 80 Penh
- 81 • Action 11: Emergency Assistance to Traffic Victims: emergency projects were introduced in
- 82 Phnom Penh and Kampong Speu by two international organizations, but with limited scope
- 83 • Action 12: Road Safety Public Campaigns: many public awareness campaigns were
- 84 organized throughout the years on helmet wearing promotion, mostly in Phnom Penh
- 85 • Action 14: Road Accident Costing Evaluation: a road crash cost analysis study was
- 86 conducted in 2009

87 Although the first National Road Safety Action Plan was initiated by the ADB, no further support
88 was provided after the development of the action plan. The implementation of the plan was then
89 partially supported by several nongovernmental organizations. There were some achievements

during 2005-2010, after the introduction of the first Road Safety Action Plan. At the same time, some challenges and obstacles were observed. First, all of the projects mentioned in the actions above were initiated and implemented by nongovernmental organizations. Collaborations and participations were observed during implementation, but government teams did not fully manage the process. This led to limited knowledge transfer in terms of strategy development and project management. Second, the resources of these nongovernmental organizations were limited, compared to the specific project needs and the growing road safety issue in the country. For example, in 2010, a total of USD 0.8M was allocated by these organizations for road safety, compared to an annual economic cost of USD 279M due to road crashes in the same year (Sann, Gnim, Phan, Morrison, & Jong, 2012). The majority of the implementation occurred in Phnom Penh only.

In 2015, as part of the technical assistance for this project, a Road Safety Advisor was appointed for Cambodia for four months (the first author). The assignment produced several primary outputs, which included the organization of national training on traffic law enforcement and road safety management, the conduct of a training needs survey and cost analysis study, and the development of a proposal for strengthening speed management. It is important to note that unlike other ADB technical assistance projects, this assignment adopted a capacity building approach, which promoted and encouraged the local road safety team in the government to step up and take action. Rather than having a separate consultancy team, the government team worked with the Road Safety Advisor, with support from the project team leader, to deliver those outputs.

A team of four people from the government received a two-week comprehensive training program on road safety management, enforcement, community based promotion, motorcycle safety and data systems. Following training, they were technically and financially supported to organize two national workshops in Cambodia. One of their tasks was to review all training materials and be able to deliver them in Khmer language. They then progressively took the lead in meetings and other project activities, such as conducting cost analysis, to build up their knowledge of the project concept.

In particular, the development of the speed management proposal included various consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders from government institutions as well as non-governmental organizations. Speed was identified and proposed as the key priority for this proposal through evidence-based consultation among all partners and from the annual road crash report. The government team facilitated the consultation process, which included brainstorming ideas, proposing a strategy and developing the project framework. It was the first proposal developed by the national team, in collaboration with various stakeholders for speed management.

Conclusion

The research capacity building approach adopted in this project highlighted the feasibility of increasing participation from existing stakeholders, especially the government in identifying existing human resources, building the capacity of relevant government officials and supporting them to take the ownership of the project. It is crucial to involve the government from the early stage of the project design and to lead the consultation process among other road safety governmental and civil society stakeholders. This project filled a gap in the ADB project cycle, since it has contributed to the local capacity building for the government team and Road Safety Advisor, who are not international consultants. It strengthened the involvement and participation of road safety related stakeholders beyond the preparation stage (the development of the speed management project proposal). It is hoped that similar outcomes will occur in the other ASEAN countries.

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