

Digo Bikas Institute (DBI) 2024-25 Summary Report



In 2025, the Digo Bikas Institute (DBI) reached an important milestone. Its long-standing work with communities to improve urban living conditions gained stronger recognition from local residents, governments, and partner organizations across Nepal. Through the Livable Cities Nepal program, DBI focused on improving public spaces, supporting local economies, and strengthening collaboration between communities and local authorities.

Improving Community Spaces

DBI worked closely with Kathmandu Metropolitan City to test and scale small, practical changes to public spaces. This partnership led to pilot projects in Ward 8, Jayabageshwori, and Naxal.

Through the *Baithak: Pop-up Living Room* series, DBI temporarily transformed streets and public spaces into welcoming places where people could gather, interact, and spend time together. These activities encouraged social connection across age groups and helped build a stronger sense of community.

In Hadigaun, this work reached a turning point. After two years of Carfree Saturday activities, the municipality committed about USD 1.4 million to permanent improvements, including street upgrades and heritage-focused design. This marked a shift from temporary experiments to long-term investment in public space.



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Community Engagement and Local Action

Community participation was central to DBI's approach. Activities such as the Naxal Heritage Treasure Hunt helped children connect with local culture and better understand their neighbourhoods. In other cities, including Biratnagar and Dharan, DBI supported discussions led by youth on how to make streets safer and more people-friendly. In Kopche, DBI helped organize the first Carfree Day and supported the formation of the Kopche Children's Club, creating space for young people to take part in shaping their community. These efforts show how small, locally led activities can build momentum for broader change.

Supporting Local Economies and Cultural Identity

DBI also worked to strengthen local livelihoods and cultural practices. In Khokana, it facilitated a community dialogue on reviving local agriculture, traditions, and place-based economies, in partnership with Local Futures and Lachhi Learning Centre. This work focused on linking food systems, culture, and local resilience, especially in the face of ongoing development pressures. It highlighted the importance of maintaining local identity while supporting economic opportunities.



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Partnerships, Learning, and Capacity Building

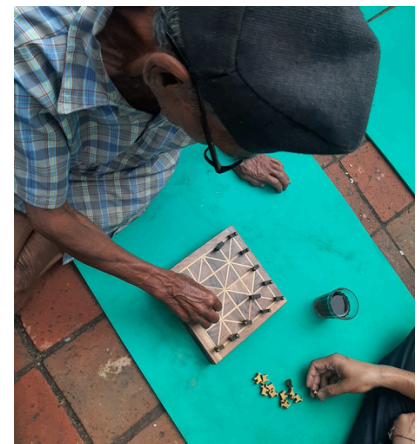
DBI expanded its work beyond individual communities through partnerships and knowledge sharing. A learning exchange between Hadigaun and the Kopche campaign helped strengthen local leadership, increase municipal commitment, and support budget allocation in both communities. These exchanges also opened opportunities for longer-term collaboration, including tourism and cultural initiatives.

At the national level, DBI worked with professional networks and partners to promote more people-centered urban planning. It contributed to the formation of an alliance focused on safer cycling in the Kathmandu Valley and supported broader discussions on reducing car dependence.

Capacity building remained a key part of DBI's work. Programs with youth and volunteers focused on understanding cities in more inclusive ways, including social, cultural, and environmental perspectives. Activities included training in community engagement and research, as well as public discussions and film screenings.

Overall Reflection

In 2025, DBI's work showed how sustained, community-led efforts can lead to broader change. Small pilot activities grew into formal partnerships, and local initiatives began to influence policy and investment decisions. The experience highlights that improving cities is not only about physical design, but also about building trust, supporting local leadership, and strengthening community ownership.



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