

Livable Cities Program

Progress and Success



April, 2014

Executive Director's Message



HealthBridge's Livable Cities program aims to improve the livability of cities by ensuring access for the most vulnerable to healthy transportation, healthy foods, and parks and public spaces. The program began in Bangladesh in 2004. We supported our local partner to collect evidence and speak out against a rickshaw ban being instituted in Dhaka that would have caused many of the city's most vulnerable to lose their income source and many others to lose an important sustainable transportation option. We believed that the health and quality of life of Dhaka's citizens was dependent on them being able to move about the city using the affordable, fuel-free rickshaws for which the city was famous.

Our program has grown greatly since then. We now support local partners in eight countries on three continents, and our partnerships are increasing every year. Since 2004 we have been advocating for the livability of cities on a number of key issues including campaigning for policies that create safe, comfortable, and convenient places for people to walk; policies that ensure all children have safe and fun places to play close to their homes; and policies that preserve neighborhood fresh markets where local residents can access healthy, affordable foods and that provide much-needed job opportunities for the vulnerable.

In all the countries in which we work, HealthBridge and our partners add a much-needed voice to ensure that future development in cities addresses the needs of all citizens, particularly women, children and the poor. This document outlines the progress we have made to date. We are proud of our successes. But there remains much to be done. We are excited about the future as we work towards making cities great places to live, work, and play.


Sian FitzGerald

Livable Cities Program

Goals

Ultimately, the HealthBridge Livable Cities program seeks to improve health and health equity for people in cities by:

- Decreasing preventable non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through increased physical activity and better nutrition
- Reducing traffic and transportation-related injuries, accidents, and deaths
- Reducing poverty
- Reducing gender inequality



Strategies

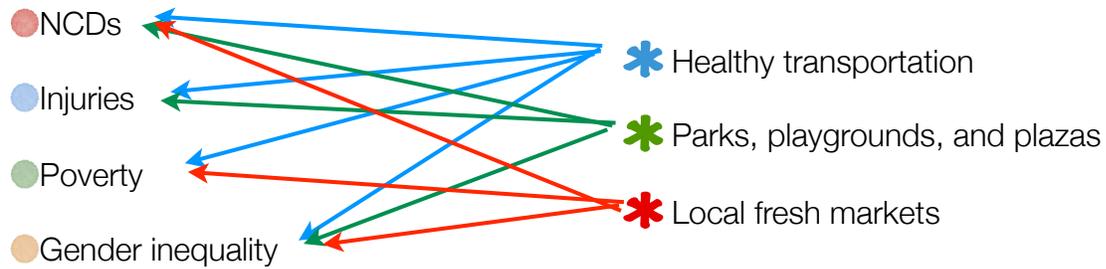
We believe the best way to achieve our ultimate goals is to ensure that everyone who lives in a city, especially the most vulnerable, live in places that support healthy behaviours. To do this, we are improving the livability of cities by creating access to:



- * Healthy transportation options, which will support active transportation and public transit
- * Parks, playgrounds, and plazas, which provide important places for recreation and physical activity
- * Local fresh markets, which provide local residents with healthy, affordable food

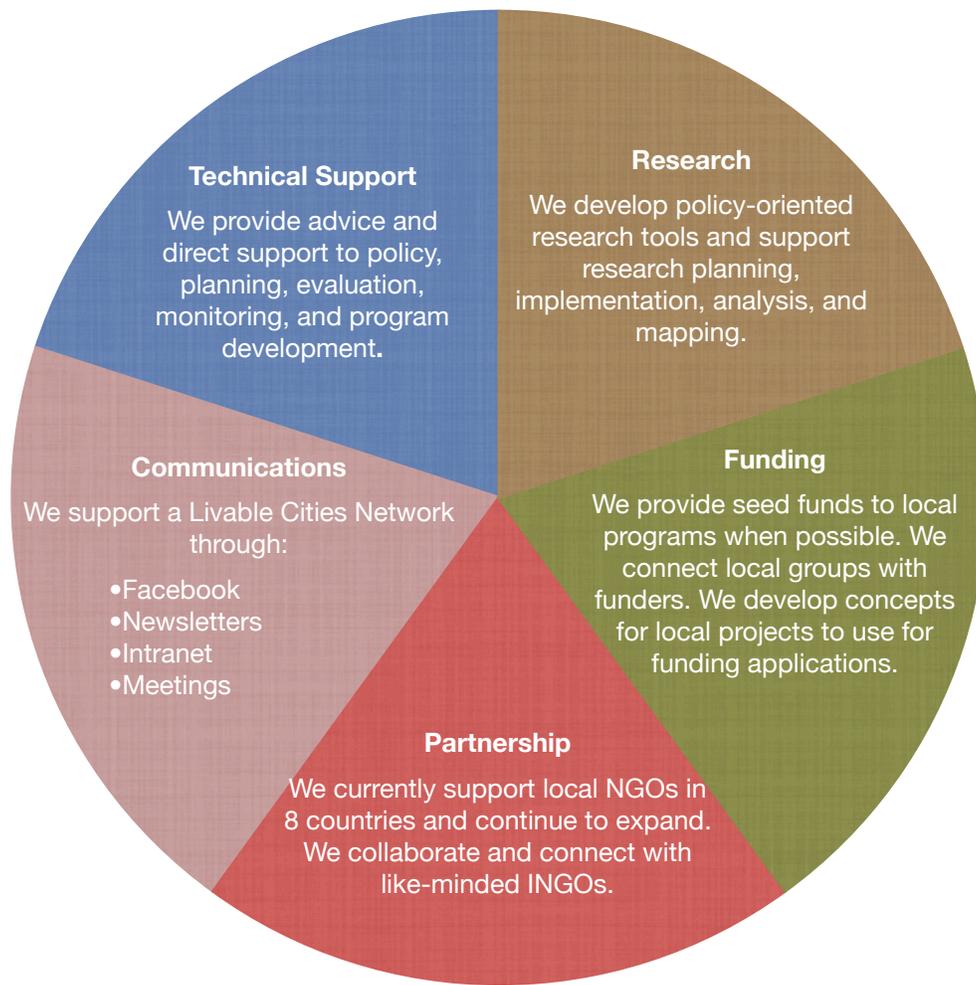
How are the goals and strategies connected?

Each strategy is connected to our four main goals:



How We Work

HealthBridge works with partners world-wide. We provide support to local NGOs:



Local Partners

The Livable Cities Program would not be a success without the committed and highly-skilled network of partner NGOs in the countries where we work.

HealthBridge Partner Countries



Partner List:

Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB Trust, Bangladesh)

EkoRural (Ecuador)

Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF, India)

Resource Centre for Primary Healthcare (RECPHEC, Nepal)

Peaceful Roads (Niger)

University of Moratuwa (Sri Lanka)

Noncommunicable Disease Information and Control Centre (NICC, Uganda)

HealthBridge Vietnam (HBV, Vietnam)



Successes

HealthBridge and our partners have achieved many successes through research and advocacy efforts. We have increased community and policymaker attention to the importance of public spaces in Sri Lanka; raised the awareness of the prevalence of junk food advertising in Nepal; brought the issue of walkability and the urban poor onto policymakers' agendas in Niger; and regularly contribute to the international understanding of how urban planning and transport policies are related to development and NCDs. Our work with local NGOs makes important improvements in communities and in the lives of urban residents. The following are examples of these successes.



Healthy Transportation

Encouraging walking, cycling, and public transit is a solution to many of our cities' problems. Car-centric urban development in cities decreases people's ability to move freely about the city and has a major impact on public health. Low-income groups, in particular, are affected by how their cities are designed because they have fewer transportation options. By encouraging people to walk, cycle, and, when necessary, to use public transit to reach the places they live, work and play we create safer, cleaner, healthier, and more social places.

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Creating a Walkability Strategy for Dhaka

In 2011, WBB Trust was funded by the Asian Development Bank to conduct a walkability study in select areas surrounding a proposed Bus Rapid Transit Line. The research found that despite the presence of both mixed traffic speeds and aggressive drivers, 44% of the road segments had no sidewalks and only 3% of the road segments had crossing aids. WBB Trust used the research results to advocate to the government and demonstrate the needs of pedestrians. The results of this advocacy include a successful court case that lead to:

- 19 zebra crossings added over 5 kilometres of corridors
- 17 police enforcing zebra crossings during peak travel times (8am to 9am and 4pm to 5pm)
- over 3000 pedestrians able to cross safely during peak travel times



Map of Sidewalk Availability in Study Area

In order to expand their reach, WBB has trained five other organizations to conduct similar research and these organizations have begun submitting their results to the local authorities. The Bangladesh pedestrian research is an example of how a relatively small-scale study conducted locally can have lasting policy and infrastructure impacts.

- Impact:
- NCDs - by creating safer places to walk, people are able to choose to be physically active
 - Injuries - by focusing on safe crossings, conflicts between motor vehicles and pedestrians are reduced thereby reducing injuries
 - Poverty - by focusing on areas close to the garment factories the improved infrastructure is creating safer ways for a vulnerable group to walk to and from work
 - Gender inequality - by paying specific attention to the needs of women, the project is reducing the likelihood of women being harassed on the streets

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Saving the Cycle Rickshaw



Cycle rickshaws are an important pollution-free sustainable mode of transportation in Dhaka. They provide a low cost and accessible alternative to motor vehicles, which is particularly important for vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly. They are also an important source of income for the estimated 500,000 rickshaw pullers in Dhaka. In 2004 the government in Dhaka had a detailed plan that would eliminate rickshaws on many roads in order to make cars flow more easily.

This would have reduced the practicality of using rickshaws because they would no longer provide direct connections to key destinations. Staff at WBB Trust knew that to get policymakers to change their approach to the rickshaw would require a change in public discussion. The extensive communication work changed the ways the media discussed rickshaws from being almost entirely anti-rickshaw to being focused on the benefits of the rickshaws and the harm of the bans. In addition to its media work, WBB Trust organized workshops, developed strategic alliances, and held meetings with policymakers. The government greatly modified their initial proposal and no new bans occurred until March 2011. The results of this advocacy are:

“Rather than eating three times a day, the family now eats twice in the morning and the evening. Now a-days they cannot afford to eat fish, which they used to eat quite regularly. In an attempt to raise the family income, one of the daughters was taken out of school and began working in a garment factory. This work from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. was so gruelling that she could not continue.”
Quote from Barakat et al., 2004 describing the effects found on the livelihood of rickshaw drivers and their families after initial restrictions were implemented.

- In 2004, 20 negative articles were written about rickshaws and no positive articles. By 2005 there were 157 articles in favour of rickshaws and 24 anti-rickshaw articles
- An estimated 7500 rickshaw jobs were saved
- There was a savings of approximately 10% of travel costs for passengers

WBB Trust continues to be vigilant and regularly watches for signs that the government is planning to implement new bans. This project is an example of why local NGOs are vital to sustainable transportation efforts as only a local NGO has the capability of changing the way local media discusses key issues.

- Impact:
- Poverty - by greatly slowing the spread of the bans, rickshaw driver jobs and income were protected
 - Gender inequality - by stopping the bans, women’s mobility was protected as women in Dhaka overwhelmingly prefer to travel by cycle rickshaw (47% rely on rickshaws for travel)

Parks, Playgrounds and Plazas

Parks, playgrounds and plazas are important places in neighbourhoods where residents can be active and social, and can experience nature. Children, women, and the elderly, in particular, need safe community spaces close to home that allow them to experience the natural world.

Unfortunately, in many cities around the world, neighbourhood parks and playgrounds are shrinking in size and quantity. Parks are disappearing because they are being misused, encroached by commercial activities and developed into stores and residences.

Protecting and improving parks, playgrounds and plazas is a key issue for HealthBridge and our partners. By preserving these spaces and making them comfortable, safe and convenient to access, we create happy, healthier communities.



Nagpur, India

Creating Functional Parks in India

In 2010, ESAF conducted a study that found children were no longer able to play outside and were instead playing video games and watching television, which directly contributes to the obesity epidemic in India. To address the problem, HealthBridge and our local partner, ESAF, created safe places for children to play. Advocacy to the local government resulted in six parks being redesigned and improved and increased the number of parks that provide play equipment for children with different needs. With the input and support from the local residents, government officials used simple and easy to replicate techniques such as improving equipment, painting walls and planting flowers to improve the spaces. The results have been impressive and include:

- 282 boys, 225 girls, and 87 women now making use of the playgrounds during organized programs
- 130 differently-abled children now making use of the playgrounds
- 59 women identified to be advocates for parks in their local community

This is an excellent example of how advocacy and community mobilization can encourage greater government support for improving spaces for children. In order to expand their reach, ESAF is now working with the women in their micro-credit financing program to train them to be advocates for parks and playgrounds.

- Impact:
- NCDs - by creating safer places to play, more children are physically active
 - Injuries - by focusing on improving the equipment and maintenance, both children and the elderly report feeling safer in the parks
 - Gender inequality - by paying specific attention to the needs of girls, the project is increasing the opportunities for girls to be active and social in their neighbourhood

Hoi An, Vietnam

Developing a Parks Master Plan in Hoi An

HealthBridge Vietnam and our local partner, Action Centre for City Development (ACCD), conducted research in 2012 on the quality of the parks in Hoi An. The findings were disseminated to the city government at a workshop and the community engagement strategies from Nagpur, India were shared. As a result of this workshop and the recommendations from the research, the city organized a “City Team” of government policymakers to develop a Parks Master Plan that would ensure that all residents of Hoi An have access to quality parks. As part of this work, ACCD has pilot tested a community engagement process to design and build parks and playgrounds on the grounds of existing community houses. Community houses are located within walking distance of residents in each neighbourhood of Hoi An and offer the perfect opportunity to increase playgrounds in the city. The parks were developed with community fundraising and participation and the lessons learned from these pilot tests are forming an integral part of the Master Plan process. Specific results include:

- 5 neighbourhood parks improved
- 6000 residents now able to access a safe and fun park close to home



Once the Parks Master Plan has been developed and implemented it will result in all 92,000 residents being able to access a park and playground within walking distance of their home. In addition, the Hoi An experience provides an excellent example of how a relatively small investment can have an impact on both a national and international level. The community engagement strategy in Nagpur, India inspired the work of the Hoi An government to better engage their local citizens. After the pilots were conducted in Hoi An, ACCD was able to share their lessons learned related to fundraising, engaging the community and local authorities, and park and playground design, with four other Vietnamese cities. Three provincial authorities have visited Hoi An to learn from their experience and we expect that when the Master Plan is complete, the national government will make it a model for the rest of the country.

- Impact:
- NCDs - by creating safer places to play, more children are physically active
 - Injuries - by adding equipment and focusing on the maintenance of the space, both children and the elderly report feeling safer in the parks
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* Local Fresh Markets

Local fresh markets provide a critical place for urban residents to access healthy fresh food. In low- and middle-income countries they allow people to shop on a daily basis at affordable prices. The markets are located close to people's homes and places of work, which allows them to quickly and easily access the markets by walking or cycling. Furthermore, there are more opportunities for social interaction between customers and sellers, which provides an important urban and rural connection. Finally, local fresh markets require little overhead, which helps keep prices low and offers many employment opportunities. Protecting and preserving these public spaces is critical for the livability of cities.

Hanoi, Vietnam

Saving the Markets Campaign

The official policy of the government of Hanoi was to replace many of the local markets with a few shopping malls and supermarkets. HBV was concerned about how this would impact the health of residents and the livelihoods of the urban poor.

HBV conducted a series of case studies with buyers and sellers of displaced markets in order to better understand the issues. They used that information to raise awareness among government officials and local experts through a series of workshops. In addition, HBV organized a media campaign that focused on why the markets are important for health, the economy and local culture. As a result, the Vice-Minister for Trade committed to a consultation process on the proposed market plan.



This gave HBV an opportunity to influence policy. Their efforts contributed to the Hanoi Government's decision to stop three projects to replace markets with commercial centres and to cease rebuilding eight markets that were to be combined with shopping malls. In total:

- 2700 vendors' livelihoods were saved and they are able to continue to run their businesses in the markets
- 270,000 people who shop at these markets can continue to access healthy fresh food close to home at affordable prices.

This is another example of research and advocacy efforts that resulted in preserving the livability of cities. HBV will continue its efforts to save local markets by working with the government to introduce policies that protect markets and by strategizing with local groups to improve the conditions in the markets.

- Impact:
- NCDs - by saving markets, fresh food continues to be available in local neighbourhoods, increasing the likelihood of people maintaining healthier diets
 - Poverty- by saving the markets, the urban and rural poor continue to have protected locations where they can sell their goods and support their livelihoods; urban residents have continued access to affordable healthy food
 - Gender inequality- by saving the markets, women's employment opportunities are enhanced since the majority of sellers are women; having the markets located in local neighbourhoods saves women time as women are the primary buyers within the markets.



Tools and Publications

All tools and publications can be found on the HealthBridge website at www.healthbridge.ca

Tools

Broadening the Focus from Tobacco Control to NCD Prevention: Enabling Environments for Better Health

Building Neighbourhood Playgrounds: Lessons from the Field

From the Field: Building and Maintaining Strong Networks to Address Tobacco, Poverty, and Development

Low Cost Research for Advocacy

Using Media and Research for Advocacy: Low Cost Ways to Increase Success

Publications

Cities for Children: Defining the Dream and Achieving the Reality

Hanoi at a Cross-Roads: Streets for People or Cars?

Hanoi - Fresh markets, a Way of Life and Public Health Under Threat

Hoi An Public Spaces Research Report

Improving Dhaka's Traffic Situation: Lessons from Mirpur Road

Livable Cities: Ideas and Actions

Media Coverage of Junk Food and its Content Analysis on Selected Nepali and Indian Television Stations

Moving Dangerously, Moving Pleasurably: Improving Walkability in Dhaka: Using a BRT Walkability Strategy to Make Dhaka's Transportation Infrastructure Pedestrian-Friendly.

NCDs and Development

NCDs and Poverty

Nutrition and NCD Prevention

Pedestrianisation of Commercial Street: Reclaiming Public Spaces. A Situational Analysis of Commercial Street in Bangalore

Physical Activity and NCD Prevention

Public Spaces: How they Humanize Cities

Public Spaces and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach, Sri Lanka

Transportation and Poverty Reduction

Urban Development Trends in Hanoi & Impact on Ways of Life, Public Health and Happiness

Walkability and Pedestrian Facilities in Thrissur City

Working with the Media to Change Social Attitudes

Donors

Our progress would not have been possible without our donor support. The Livable Cities Program is generously supported by private donors. In addition, the program has received past funding support from:

- World Health Organization
- Pan American Health Organization
- World Bank
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Government of Victoria (Australia)
- Government of New South Wales (Australia)
- National Heart Foundation (Australia)
- The Sax Institute (Sydney)
- The Healthway Health Promotion Foundation (Perth)
- NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity (Sydney)
- The Cancer Council NSW (Sydney).
- NSW Department of Health
- Halton Region's Health Department
- Health Canada, Health Protection Branch, Ontario Region