
Work for a Better Bangladesh Summary Report 2016-2017

Livable Cities Program

May 2017



Introduction

Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust (WBB) is a non-profit, non-government organization. Our work on livable cities issues started in 2004 when the government of Bangladesh wanted to ban the bicycle rickshaw, which is a sustainable, healthy, and non-polluting form of transportation in the city. The banning of the rickshaws would have resulted in increased congestion in the city, increased pollution, and would have eliminated many thousands of jobs for the working poor. WBB fought the ban with success and since that time, with the technical and financial support of HealthBridge, has expanded we have expanded our livable cities program to include other issues that impact the quality of life of people living in Bangladeshi cities.



Our Vision

Our vision for our livable cities program is clear. We want all cities in Bangladesh to include:

- Children can play in the street and walk to school safely
- Everyone can walk to a local park to visit with the neighbours and enjoy nature
- Everyone can walk to stores and services
- Everyone can cross the street easily and safely
- Cycling is common for recreation and for transportation
- When people need to leave their neighbourhood, they can take public transit
- Everyone has access to clean drinking water
- Water is treated as a precious resource
- Lakes, rivers, parks and streets are free of pollution
- People hear children laughing not cars honking
- People breathe clean air
- People have access to healthy foods

The focus of our work is in three main areas:

- Pedestrian Rights
- Active and Safe Routes to School
- Public Space



We use the strategies of research, policy development, community engagement and capacity building to convince city authorities, local authorities and community people of the importance of creating livable cities.

1. Research - in order to ensure that we have the best available information with which we can decide on our priorities, we conduct research studies. These studies are then used to inform government officials and the community and help prioritize our issue areas.
2. Policy Development - we work with government partners to change policy and implement the needed changes. We organize meetings with government officials and community members and groups in order to support healthy public policy.
3. Community Engagement - we look for ways to ensure the community is involved in all stages of program development and implementation. This helps ensure that the community understands and wants the changes being made. We organize meetings and events that help generate interest in our issues and helps demonstrate to the government that our activities are supported by the community.
4. Capacity Building - in order to ensure our partners, the community, and government officials are able to implement the needed infrastructure changes to make cities more livable, we organize meetings and workshops to explain concepts, highlight best practices, and provide support to those trying to make changes.

As a result of our strategies, we had the following successes for 2016-2017.

Pedestrian Rights

Bangladeshi cities lack safe, healthy transportation options and the overall goal of our Pedestrian Rights program is to ensure that pedestrians are acknowledged as the first priority in government plans. We began this program in 2005 and the impacts of our work in 2016/2017 include:

- During the World Car-Free Day event, the Honourable Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) announced they would open one pedestrian-only street in 2017. Work on this initiative has already begun and it is expected that the street will be open to pedestrians in mid-2017.



- As a result of our advocacy, the Honourable Minister of Road, Transport, and Bridges announced they would restrict the ownership of private automobiles in the city. The draft of the new Act will permit each family to have only one vehicle. This restriction is the first of its kind in Bangladesh and will go a long way to controlling car use in the city.

The results of our activities in 2016-2017 include:

Research	Policy Development	Community Engagement	Capacity Building
<p>Conducted 5 observation surveys</p> <p>Disseminated 5 reports to 2 city corporations</p>	<p>Organized 30 meetings with government officials</p> <p>Organized 1:1 meetings with 12 government organizations, 36 non-government organizations, 1 Advisor to the Mayor, and 1 Private Secretary of the Mayor.</p> <p>Organized 1 View Exchange meeting with 3 urban planners, 2 architects, 6 journalists, and 60 stakeholders</p> <p>7 instances of media coverage</p>	<p>Organized 2 walking rallies, 3 cycle rallies and 22 awareness campaigns, and 1 car-free day.</p> <p>Involved 1 Minister, 1 Mayor, 1 Deputy Commissioner of the Police, 12 government organizations, 54 NGOs, 1 University, 85 people with disabilities, and 70 government officials.</p> <p>2000 people participated in the events. Ten million people reach through media.</p> <p>150 journalists involved and 102 media instances.</p>	<p>Organized 15 face-to-face meetings and 2 workshops</p> <p>Reached 6 NGOs, 12 journalists, and 60 students.</p>

Active and Safe Routes to School

Many children in Bangladesh no longer walk to school and those that do walk often face unsafe travelling conditions. The Active and Safe Routes to School Program is focused on ensuring that the walk to school is safe, comfortable and convenient for children, their parents, and teachers. We began this program in 2014 and the impacts of our work for 2016/2017 include:

- Seven schools are now participating in the ASRTS program and this has resulted in 95% of children walking to school regularly.
- Increased support from government authorities, civil society, the media, and the public for the program, which we expect will lead to greater uptake of the program in local communities.



The results of our activities in 2016-2017 include:

Research	Policy Development	Community Engagement	Capacity Building
<p>Conducted surveys at four schools with 1200 students and increased our understanding of the challenges children face when walking to school</p> <p>Disseminated 1 reports to 2 government officials, 1 policy maker, 8 media houses, 1 urban planner and 1 architect</p>	<p>Organized 3 meetings with 3 government officials</p> <p>Organized 1 View Exchange meeting with 2 urban planners, 3 school authorities, 6 journalists, and 60 NGOs</p> <p>7 instances of media coverage</p>	<p>Organized 12 meetings with the community and 3 awareness campaigns</p> <p>150 letters sent to the Mayor of DNCC</p> <p>Reached 50 community people and 200 students</p> <p>11 instances of media coverage</p>	<p>Organized 6 face-to-face meetings</p> <p>Reached 30 children, 10 guardians, 1 school, 2 teachers, 2 journalists, and 500 government and NGOs</p>

Public Spaces

Unfortunately Bangladeshi cities lack public spaces and those spaces that do exist are encroached and of poor quality. Our work on public spaces, which began in 2008 is intended to improve the quantity and quality of public spaces in Bangladesh. The impacts of our work include:

- As a result of our advocacy, Dhaka North City Corporation installed 3000 waste bins throughout the city, resulting in cleaner streets and public spaces.
- Advocacy efforts help cancel the Dhaka South City Corporation’s plans to relocate vendors in a local park. These vendors use the park for their livelihoods and relocation would have meant many would lose their income.



The results of our activities in 2016-2017 include:

Research	Policy Development	Community Engagement	Capacity Building
<p>Conducted 3 studies to examine the quality of parks in a variety of neighbourhoods</p> <p>Disseminated 3 reports to 1 University</p>	<p>Organized 3 meetings government officials</p> <p>Organized 1 Round Table Meeting meeting with 3 government officials, 1 Mayor, 1 urban planner, 1 architect, 7 journalists, and 80 NGOs</p> <p>5 instances of media coverage</p>	<p>Organized 15 meetings with the 42 community people, 3 government officials, 7 NGOs</p> <p>Organized 4 park programs with 120 people attending</p> <p>Organized 6 Parklet programs with 90 people attending</p> <p>28 instances of media coverage</p>	<p>Organized 2 cleaning days, 8 face to face meetings, and 1 workshop</p> <p>Reached 45 community people, 80 students, 2 journalists</p>

Conclusion

In 2016-2017 WBB achieved many important successes that helped us to achieve our vision of more livable cities. Some important lessons were learned during the implementation of our program including:

- In order to successfully change policy, it is essential to give a consistent message and deliver that message at regular intervals. We have been advocating for the government to give more attention to pedestrians for many years and this year we saw success when the government announced car-free streets in Dhaka. This announcement was not the result of the celebration of one day but rather was the result of years of advocacy.
- The media plays a vital role in creating awareness among the general public and among government officials. It has been our experience that developing good relationship with media houses has helped us to increase the number of media instances in Livable Cities issues. We've developed these relationships by being reliable partners with journalists.
- Through a continuous community engagement process, we have gained support from the community in all of our events. This has increased both awareness and support for Livable Cities issues.
- There are many opportunities to involve youth in our programming. Youth are natural allies for our parks and pedestrian programs and by building the capacity of the youth, we are creating youth advocates.

In conclusion, WBB had a successful year with our continued focus on pedestrian rights, ASRTS, and public spaces. We look forward to continuing our work in 2017/2018.

