
ESAF Summary Annual Report 2015-2016



ESAF with technical guidance from HealthBridge Foundation Canada has been spreading the message about the importance of the built environment to health and the environment in India, since 2009. In 2015-2016 ESAF worked in four cities in three States: Thrissur and Malappuram in Kerala; Nagpur in Maharashtra; and, Bangalore in Karnataka. Our vision is:

Children Walking to School in Bangalore

“We want happy and healthy children and families in every neighbourhood who have safe streets, free access to parks, playgrounds, open space and fun places to play around”.

The focus our work is in three main areas:

- Reclaiming Public Spaces
- Healthy Transportation
- Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)

We use the strategies of research, advocacy, community engagement, building partnerships and working with media to convince city administrators, local elected bodies, and community residents of the importance of creating sustainable built environments. The following outlines our successes for 2015-2016.

Reclaiming Public Spaces

Our experience in India, taught us that poor people, girls, and the differently abled are in most need of parks and public spaces. We worked with the community to reclaim public spaces, parks, and beaches. The impacts of our work on public spaces over the last 4 years include:

- There is improved condition in 15 parks, impacting the approximately 6500 children and 5000 adults regularly using the parks. In addition, there are 75,000 people living close to these parks who now have a safe and comfortable place to socialize, play, and relax.
- There has been a significant increase in government commitment to parks and public spaces including 20 million India Rupees (INR) for parks and public space development, 5.6 million INR have been allocated to rejuvenate water bodies and ponds, and 500,000 INR more than the previous year to renovate and maintain parks.
- Government officials are examining ways to incorporation inclusive play space design into all of their parks in order to allow differently abled children to play in all public spaces.

In order to achieve these impacts we used four key strategies:

1. Infrastructure Changes - a major part of our program is to work with the local community to reclaim and redesign their local parks. We organize park design workshops with local community members and government officials to develop parks that meet the needs of the local community. This strategy also ensures government commitment to improve the park and community commitment to help maintain the parks.



Children on a park tour in Bangalore

2. Women Local Advocates - we worked with the ESAF Self Help Groups, who are women connected to the ESAF micro-credit finance program. These women received training and support in order to be able to advocate for improvements in their local park and participate in the design and maintenance of their local park.
3. Community Engagement Programs- in order to further encourage the broader community to use the park, we organized activities and events in the parks such as health camps and children’s games. Volunteers are trained to organize these events to create sustainability.
4. Research - Kerala state is located along the sea and has many beaches. In order to understand the role that beaches play in the community and the currently quality of the beaches, we conducted a situational analysis of the beaches by conducting audits and interviews.

The results of our activities in 2015-2016 include:

Infrastructure Changes	Women as Advocates	Community Engagement programs	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 parks redesigned • 6 elected members of government involved • 3 government officials supported the work and helped make the changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 walking club formed with 80 members • 2 park councils formed • 3 capacity building programs for park volunteers • 3 parks reclaimed • 100 self help group women trained • 32 park events organized by self help group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 health camps organized • 48 park events organized in 2 neighbourhoods • 17 government officials participated • 55 men reached through health camps • 554 women participated in health camps and park events • 11060 children participated in park events of which 40% were girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 beaches audited • 1 beach audit report prepared • 11 government officials reached through key informant interviews • 23 elected members reached through key informant interviews

Healthy Transportation

Most Indian cities lack safe healthy transportation options and the overall goal of our program is to improve the situation for pedestrians and cyclists. The first step in achieving such a goal is to raise awareness among the community about the importance of walking and cycling for health, for the environment, and for the economy. We began this program in 2013/2014 and the impacts of our work for 2015/2016 include:

- 2 communities have started working on their Neighbourhood Improvement Plan (NIP), which now includes a detailed assessment of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure- cycling stands at various locations in the neighbourhood.
- The government of Karnataka used the ESAF research results to justify the allocation of funds for the Open Street Events in different districts. Officials from the Municipality and District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) from Malappuram have incorporated ESAF's recommendations into their city development plans and have allocated budget for pedestrian facilities by allocating road space for paved footpaths.
- The Department of Traffic Thrissur organised with ESAF an awareness program for 350 auto drivers on safe driving and the educational materials developed by ESAF is been used extensively by Department of Traffic for their awareness and induction programs.



Cycle Day Events in Bangalore

In order to achieve these impacts we used four key strategies:

1. Capacity Building - in order to ensure that partners, the community, and government officials are able to implement the needed infrastructures changes to improve the healthy transportation options in the cities, we organize meeting and workshops to explain the concepts and provide support for changes.
2. Community Engagement Programs- in order to help the community experience what it might be like to walk and cycle safely and comfortably, we organized events such as cycle day, open streets, and car-free day. These types of events help generate public interest in

healthy transportation and support our advocacy efforts by demonstrating to government officials that such activities are supported by the community.

3. Policy - we work with government partners to change policy and implement the needed changes. We organize meetings with government officials and community representatives and groups in order to support healthy public policy.
4. Research - we conducted several research initiatives related to both the open street events and the walkability surveys in order to increase our awareness of the current state of healthy transportation and to share those results with government officials and the community in order to increase their awareness.

The results of our activities in 2015-2016 include:

Capacity Building for Partners	Community Engagement Programs	Policy Development	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54 meetings organised to explain healthy transport concepts and increased capacity • 1 advocacy training organised • 39 NGO’s trained • 17 journalists trained • 38 elected members • 45 Govt officials trained • 301 community members trained • 11 new community’s capacity built for CD/ open street events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 cycle days 3 open streets, 2 CFD, 4 Road safety events • 127262 people attended the events • 118 media instances • 1 Million people reached through media • 4 Radio broadcasts with 50,000 people reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51 meetings with government officials • 114 government officials reached through meetings • 24 NGO members participating • 1 guideline developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Walkability Research • 1 survey on Open street event conducted, with 575 respondents, report disseminated to 8000 public • 2 Dissemination seminars with 23 journalists, 42 citizens and 89 government officials and elected members attending • 30 media instances

Active and Safe Routes to School

Many children in India no longer walk to school. The Active and Safe Routes to School Program (ASRTS) is focused on changing the way children, and their parents and teachers, travel to school. Walking and cycling to school is good for the environment, good for health, and good for safety. We began this program in 2013/2014 and the impacts of our work for 2015/2016 include:

- Six schools participated in the program and have now taken ownership of the program and have included ASRTS in the curriculum. One school implemented a 100 metre safe zone where buses and cars are not allowed around the school to be respected every school day.
- A total 3500 children, 150 parents, and 120 teachers walked or cycled to school on Saturdays, which was the designated walking/ cycling day.
- Parents and children reported great enthusiasm for the program and children indicated they were happier with their parents walking them to school instead of driving them.
- Infrastructure projects surrounding the ASRTS have greater community involvement and are being implemented more quickly in order to support the program.



Walking School Bus in Nagpur

In order to achieve these impacts we used four key strategies:

1. Community Outreach - a major part of our program is to work with the local community, especially parents, to raise awareness of the program and encourage their participation and support. We organized awareness programs to explain the programs and distributed educational material.
2. Walk to School Saturday Campaigns - in order to give the students, parents, and teachers an opportunity to experience walking to school, we organized "Walk to School Saturdays". This involved identifying safe routes, organizing traffic safety along the routes, mapping routes among students, and organizing competitions.
3. I Walk Clubs - in order to provide support for children to walk to school and to encourage walking and cycling to be considered the best way to arrive and depart from school, clubs

that children can join are formed. They conduct activities such as mapping their routes and drawing competitions.

4. Research - in order to better understand the situation around the schools, we conducted baseline research to determine the number of children currently walking or cycling and the safety around the school.

The results of our activities in 2015-2016 include:

Community Outreach	Walk to School Days	iWalk Clubs	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified 1 community partner • Organized 11 awareness programs in 11 schools; 30 parents, 109 teachers, 3234 students, 4 government officials reached through awareness activities • Distributed educational material to 55 parents, 92 teachers, 420 students, and 7 social work interns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized 13 walk/cycle to school on Saturdays; 6720 children, 200 parents, 85 teachers, 45 volunteers, and 3 transport planners participated • “Map my route” competition organized with 7 schools and 429 participants • Poster Competition on “My Sanjay Nagar” with 24 students participating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 walking school bus program; 70 students, 1 Principal, 2 teachers, 25 parents, 7 social work interns participated • 6 walking clubs formed; 158 students participated • 9 communities observed Road Safety Week; 897 students, 68 student police cadets, 12 women, 17 volunteers, 5 social work students, 10 NGO representatives, and 14 government officials participated • 2 media instances that potentially reached 1.5 million people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baselines survey in 5 schools conducted • 1 research study conducted on collisions around 5 schools • 1 photo documentation project conducted identifying pedestrian infrastructure around schools

Conclusion

In 2015-2016, ESAF achieved many important successes that help us achieve our mission of healthy neighbourhoods. Some important lessons that were learned in implementation are:

- In order to achieve community support and government action, it is important to increase the understanding of our issues and organizing dissemination seminars and preparing education material is an effective strategy for achieving these objectives.
- By working with the media we have the potential to magnify our activities and reach a much larger segment of the population. Journalists and the media should be considered as key partners and supported in a similar manner through capacity building initiatives.
- Sometimes it can be difficult for community members to imagine what changes might be like. Large scale events such as cycle days, car-free days, and open streets are an excellent way to help the community experience the benefits of public spaces and healthy transportation. This helps create advocates and support for needed policy changes.
- It is important to build rapport with government officials and this takes time and a gentle touch. Activities such as one to one meetings, sharing research reports and best practices, and exposure visits have proven to be effective.
- By building the capacity of the community and likeminded stakeholders we have the capacity to expand our reach and effectiveness. It is important to work with different stakeholder at all stages of a program.
- Government funding is available but is often not being used for the allocated purpose. Examining city budgets carefully can help identify potential funding. In addition, many cities have funding that can be used for public spaces and community events such as Mayor's funds and MLA and MP Local Area Development (LAD) funds.

In conclusion, ESAF had a very successful year and with continued focusing on reclaiming public spaces, healthy transportation, and active and safe routes to school, we will help India achieve happy and healthy children and families in every neighbourhood who have safe streets, free access to parks, playgrounds, open space and fun places to play around.

