

From risk assessment to road safety with the Yemen Red Crescent Society

Background

In 2001, the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) conducted a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) study in Hajjah and Hodeidah governorates. The study showed that traffic accidents are a major hazard and the YRCS decided to initiate a pilot road safety project in the two governorates. The YRCS branches in Hajjah and Hodeidah would carry out the project, which aimed to:

- reduce the number of the traffic accidents;
- increase the level of the local communities' awareness of the hazard;
- change the behaviour of students towards traffic; and
- decrease the number of casualties among students.

The project

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior (Police Traffic Directorate), the YRCS Disaster Management Unit (DMU) began to collect information related to road safety activities and programmes from the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and other sources worldwide.
- The target population is students of elementary schools (boys and girl) as they are the most affected by road accidents in the two governorates. The two YRCS branches prepared uniforms, posters, signs, weekly class calendars and children's drawings for four boys' and girls' schools.
- The students themselves were directly involved in the project. They were taught traffic rules and directed the traffic in front of their schools. There were 480 students in this project supervised by 30 teachers.
- All students were trained by the police department to organize the traffic in front of their schools.
- Among the students team leaders were selected to be in charge during their daily intervention.
- All students were trained in first aid.
- The YRCS and school administration organized a meeting for students' parents to get their approval. At the beginning of the project Hajjah governorate female students' families were hesitant to involve their daughters in the project. To overcome this, YRCS, the school teachers and the police department organized a meeting with the families to introduce the project and to reassure that their daughters were in safe hands and the project under control of three institutions.

Lessons learned

Impact on the students

- Students are proud to direct the traffic and to help explain traffic rules to their peers.
- The students' behaviour towards both traffic rules and policemen changed in a positive way.
- The number of children playing in the streets decreased, which showed that they were putting the rules they had learned into practice.
- More parents are asking to enrol their children in the programme.
- All the students involved in the project were trained in first aid.
- Other students initiated some other voluntary work, such as forming cleaning teams in their schools.
- The students involved in the project increased their educational performance.
- At the beginning Yemeni drivers were not accustomed to accept traffic rules and road regulations (imagine when they saw a young girl standing in the middle of the road asking them to stop). Yemeni drivers used to get orders from police, not from children, and from cultural point of view girls should be in school and at home not organizing traffic in the streets. As the project developed, female students – with support from traffic police, their school-teachers and the YRCS – became more accepted by drivers.



Road safety messages and guidelines were produced.

Impact on schools

- The relation between the schools involved in the project and the local community became stronger.
- The schools again began to take the students on excursions (for example, trips to local factories and on picnics).
- Red Crescent groups in schools were reactivated.
- The relationship between these schools and the traffic police was strengthened.
- The teachers in these schools received training in road safety activities and first aid.
- YRCS branches and the schools organized an exhibition on road safety.
- One of the private schools proposed to integrate the road safety project in its curriculum.

Impact on the YRCS

- The coordination between the YRCS and the community has been strengthened through implementing this project.
- The number of volunteers has increased.
- The level of the community's awareness about YRCS activities has grown. This led to an increase in the number of people benefiting from its medical services.
- The authorities now accept the YRCS as an auxiliary in implementing projects.
- The YRCS produced road safety guidelines for use in schools.
- The YRCS was able to profit from the project's success to disseminate information about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its Fundamental Principles.
- More schools asked to be involved in the programme.



Traffic Dissemination Materials prepared by the students and the YRCS.

- This project helped to increase the visibility of the YRCS in rural areas.
- The relationship between parents and the YRCS has been strengthened.
- Donors decided to continue to support the project after visiting Hodeidah and Hajjah.
- The YRCS project coordinators gained confidence in their abilities.
- The project will be extended in Hajjah and Hodeidah, and expanded to Sana'a and Dhamar governorates.

Conclusion

In 2004, VCAs were carried out in five other governorates. They also showed that traffic accidents are a major hazard. The YRCS, government and other organizations need to work together throughout Yemen to increase awareness and reduce the number of road accidents. Children are the future of any country; the road safety project helps save them from injury and as such is a major risk reduction activity that should be integrated in actions designed to sustain the development of Yemen.



Examples of children's drawings on Road Safety.

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