



Promoting Road Safety Awareness Among Rural Communities

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Road safety is an important public concern and has become increasingly relevant with the growing use of roads and vehicles. Every road user, including drivers, passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and two-wheeler riders, has a responsibility to follow safe road practices. Road safety includes adherence to traffic rules, proper use of helmets and seat belts, maintaining speed limits, avoiding mobile phone use while driving, preventing drunken driving and ensuring pedestrian safety. Lack of awareness, unsafe behaviour, inadequate road infrastructure and weak enforcement may increase the risk of road accidents. The National Service Scheme (NSS) provides an effective platform for creating awareness and encouraging positive behavioural changes among rural communities. NSS volunteers can organize awareness campaigns, rallies, interactive discussions, educational activities and community programmes to promote responsible road behaviour.

Objectives of the Programme

- To assess road safety awareness among rural communities.
- To promote awareness about traffic rules and road signs.
- To encourage regular use of helmets and seat belts.
- To create awareness about the dangers of drunken driving and mobile phone use while driving.
- To promote pedestrian safety and responsible road behaviour.
- To identify barriers and suggest measures for improving road safety practices..

Road Safety Awareness among Rural Respondents

The survey showed that the respondents generally possessed a satisfactory level of road safety awareness. About 88% were aware of basic traffic rules and 92% knew the importance of wearing helmets. However, only 74% reported wearing helmets regularly. Similarly, 89% of respondents knew the importance of seat belts, whereas only 69% reported using them consistently. This indicates that awareness does not always translate into actual safe behavior. Awareness regarding major risk factors was comparatively high. About 90% of respondents were aware that mobile phone use while driving increases accident risk, while 94% knew the dangers associated with drinking and driving. Awareness of road signs and symbols was reported by 81% of respondents. However, only 66% reported using zebra crossings whenever available, indicating a need for greater emphasis on pedestrian safety.

Awareness and Safe Practices

Road Safety Indicator	Yes (%)
Awareness of basic traffic rules	88
Knowledge of helmet importance	92
Regular helmet use	74

Road Safety Indicator	Yes (%)
Knowledge of seat-belt importance	89
Regular seat-belt use	69
Awareness of mobile phone risk	90
Awareness of drunken-driving risk	94
Use of zebra crossings	66
Awareness of road signs	81
Previous participation in awareness programme	58
Awareness of legal driving licence procedure	76
Believe awareness programmes are beneficial	98
Want more awareness programmes	96

The survey indicated a clear knowledge–practice gap. Although awareness regarding helmets and seat belts was high, their regular use was comparatively lower. Only 58% had previously participated in a road safety awareness programme, whereas 98% considered such programmes beneficial and 96% wanted more programmes in their villages.

Major Barriers to Road Safety

Several factors were identified as barriers to safe road practices. The most important barrier was the lack of regular road safety awareness programmes (72%), followed by lack of traffic signs (69%) and poor enforcement of traffic rules (66%). Infrastructure-related problems were also important, with 63% identifying poor street lighting and 61% reporting poor village road conditions. Behavioural factors included ignoring seat belts for short-distance travel (58%), speeding (51%), helmet discomfort (49%) and mobile phone use while driving (42%). These findings indicate that road safety improvement requires a combination of continuous education, behavioural change, better infrastructure and stronger enforcement, rather than relying only on individual awareness.

Suggestions for Improving Road Safety

- Conduct Road Safety Week every year.
- Conduct regular awareness programmes.
- Strict enforcement against drunken driving.
- Improve village road conditions.
- Promote road safety education in schools.
- Conduct helmet and seat-belt awareness drives.
- Install more traffic signs.
- Conduct driving license awareness camps.
- Promote pedestrian safety campaigns.
- Increase police patrolling.

Role of NSS in Road Safety Awareness

The NSS road safety programme used participatory and educational approaches to communicate road safety messages. Interactive sessions were conducted with traffic police officials, who explained traffic regulations, common violations, legal provisions and the responsibilities of drivers and pedestrians. Road accident survivors also shared their experiences, highlighting the physical, emotional and financial consequences of road accidents. Educational pamphlets containing road safety guidelines, traffic signs and safe driving practices were distributed among community members. Reflective stickers were provided for bicycles, motorcycles and other vehicles to improve visibility. Road safety quizzes, poster-making competitions and social-media awareness activities were also organized to encourage community participation. The programme observed positive changes in participants' understanding of traffic rules, road signs, speed limits and responsible road behaviour. Participants also expressed greater willingness to follow traffic signals, use pedestrian crossings and avoid reckless and distracted driving.

Challenges

Despite satisfactory awareness levels, several challenges remain:

- Gap between awareness and actual road safety practices.
- Limited reach of regular road safety awareness programmes.
- Inadequate traffic signs and road markings.
- Poor village roads and street lighting.
- Weak enforcement of traffic regulations.
- Overspeeding and mobile phone use while driving.
- Inconsistent helmet and seat-belt use.
- Limited awareness regarding pedestrian safety.

Recommendations

- Conduct regular road safety awareness programmes through NSS.
- Organize school-based road safety education.
- Improve road signs, road markings, speed breakers and pedestrian crossings.
- Promote compulsory helmet and seat-belt use.
- Strengthen enforcement against drunken driving and overspeeding.
- Conduct driving licence awareness camps in rural areas.
- Improve village roads and street lighting.
- Encourage community participation during Road Safety Week.
- Distribute road safety pamphlets, reflective stickers and traffic-rule materials.
- Conduct periodic surveys to assess changes in awareness and behaviour.

Conclusion

Road safety awareness is essential for creating safer rural communities. The present survey among 100 respondents of Pirda and Serikhedi villages showed that awareness regarding basic traffic rules, helmet use, seat belts, mobile phone-related risks and drunken driving was generally satisfactory. However, the lower levels of regular helmet and seat-belt use indicate a considerable gap between knowledge and actual practice. The findings further revealed that lack of regular awareness programmes, inadequate traffic signs, poor enforcement, poor street lighting and poor road conditions were major barriers to safe road behaviour. At the same time, respondents showed strong support for regular awareness programmes, annual Road Safety Week, strict action against drunken driving and improvement of village roads.

Thus, the active involvement of NSS volunteers, educational institutions, local authorities, government agencies and rural communities can play an important role in promoting responsible road behaviour. Continuous awareness, improved infrastructure and effective enforcement are essential for converting road safety knowledge into consistent safe practices.

References

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