

Policy Implementation Toolkit

STAGES OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: EDUCATING THE PUBLIC



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Educating the Public

Introduction to this Implementation Stage

After legislation is passed, regulations are adopted and government implementation plans are put in place, strong education and outreach programmes are needed to ensure the public is familiar with the new policies and their requirements. This element is crucial because it can facilitate self-compliance with the law (ofcourse, enforcement is still important and that is a key stage in policy implementation). Successful efforts at educating the public about the new policy can also prevent public backlash by raising understanding about the public health goals of the policy. In the case of new child restraint or helmet policies, public awareness campaigns may also seek to build public understanding of new safety standards in order to ensure that the public obtain products which conform with those new standards. The main targets of education efforts are the public and relevant businesses (e.g.- merchants who may be required to sell helmets which comply with safety standards) which are affected by the new law.

It is important to reach the public with clear messages to raise awareness about the new law and its benefits and to educate them about the specifics of where it applies, the date it takes effect, and penalties for non-compliance. Public education and awareness campaigns can and should begin as soon as possible. Campaigns ideally begin before new policies go into effect in order to build public understanding of them and consequences for non-compliance.

Goals and objectives of this Implementation Stage

Following the passage and adoption of new road safety laws and regulations, education and outreach activities are designed to build public support and ensure all affected parties are familiar with new requirements in order to comply with the law.

Role of CSOs in this Implementation Stage

Technically, public education about new laws is the responsibility of government, but civil society often complements government efforts by assuming responsibility for at least some education programmes. Thus, the role of civil society in education and outreach will vary based on the government's political will and resources, and the implementation agency's own resources (financial and human).

Case Study: Promoting new child restraint policies in Shanghai

Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in supporting efforts to educate the public about new road safety policies.

In March 2017, changes to Shanghai's Traffic Management Rules required all children ages four and under to be in a child restraint and children under the age of 12 to be in the backseat of a motor vehicle.

To support these new requirements, SafeKids China began conducting targeted outreach to parents, hospitals, police and the general public to provide information about the new rules and the importance of child restraints. SafeKids China also partnered with a prominent maternity hospital and the Shanghai traffic police to conduct a child restraint promotion event which allowed parents to have their child restraints checked to ensure they were installed properly. The Shanghai Traffic radio simultaneously broadcasted the event to maximize its outreach potential.

In hospitals, SafeKids China partnered with the Shanghai CDC to produce two public service announcements (PSAs) to be played at maternity hospitals and aired on social media. The PSAs received 1 million reads and 350,000 playbacks within one month of launch.

Civil society organizations are strongly encouraged to reach out to government agencies responsible for implementation of a new law to work collaboratively on the development of an education and outreach plan. If the government is resistant to active implementation, CSOs may have to play an aggressive role in pressuring the government to actively implement the law.

Special efforts need to be made to reach businesses responsible for complying with the new law. Ideally, outreach to businesses will occur well before the law goes into effect in order to allow them enough time to prepare for compliance. Outreach should be the responsibility of government, but CSOs are often involved with extending or complementing their

efforts. The government agency and CSOs should collaboratively agree on each of their roles and responsibilities and jointly develop an outreach plan to ensure consistency of messaging and avoid duplication of effort.

At this stage, CSOs can:

- Assist the government with the development of campaigns to inform and educate the public and the private sector about the requirements of the new law;
- Complement government campaigns with additional education activities, when necessary;
- Educate journalists about the benefits and requirements of the law and positive economic and enforcement experiences from other jurisdictions with successful policies;
- Work with the media to educate affected parties about the key elements of the law, its benefits and penalties for non-compliance, in order to build support and increase compliance;
- Once implementing regulations are in place, work with partners and use other channels to encourage the public to report noncompliance and educate others about the law; and,
- Work with businesses and other affected parties to help them comply with the law.

Key Questions to Consider at this Implementation Stage

Civil society organizations play a critical role during the implementation process. Many of the same skills and strategies utilized during the advocacy process can be employed during the implementation phase. However, it is important to understand the role of CSO's and government within the implementation process, where and when to engage decision makers, the public, and the media, and the skills and strategies you will need to employ.

Consider the following questions to guide your strategy:

- Does the government have a plan to educate the public about the new law? If so, have you identified any gaps in that plan [See GRSP's *Building Public Support and Conducting Outreach for Policy Implementation* tool]? What role can you play in educating the public?
- Will the new law impact certain businesses? How are they being informed about the law and regulations?
- Have you developed a communications plan [See GRSP's *Developing a Media Advocacy Action Plan for Implementation* tool]? How can you utilize traditional and social media to engage the public during the implementation process?





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