



Forging an Innovative Partnership to Increase Effectiveness of Alcohol Checkpoints in Guanajuato



Representatives from the Mexican Red Cross, León Mobility Department, León Road Police and Global Road Safety Partnership hold a press conference launching the collaboration.

The Problem

Road traffic crashes are a leading cause of death in Mexico. Drink driving, alongside lack of seatbelts, is a major cause of those fatalities and serious injuries. In 2012, the WHO estimated more than 15,000 died from road crashes in the country. In 2013, 23 percent of those were estimated to have involved alcohol. Road deaths are the single leading cause of death for 10 to 29 year olds, and each year Mexico loses over 2% of their GDP to road crashes.

Since the 2000s, Mexico has worked to make improvements in legislation and enforcement to address the toll of road crashes. Several state governments implemented drink-driving legislation, including the reduction in limits of Blood Alcohol Concentration levels and enforcement measures aimed at reducing drink-driving. However, unacceptable drunken driving rates continued, including in the city of León in the State of Guanajuato.

The Mexican Red Cross Society (MRCS) has been involved in road safety for many years, and has remained concerned about the large number of drink driving incidents in Guanajuato and across the country. Having worked in many areas of road safety, the MRCS searched for a new, innovative way to use its expertise and trusted reputation to increase the effectiveness of Mexico's legislation.

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A Mexican Red Cross ambulance is stationed at a drink driving checkpoint.

The Policy Challenge

In 2014 the Guanajuato State legislature approved the establishment of random alcohol checkpoints for drivers on the road. Random alcohol checkpoints are proven to be effective in drink driving enforcement and are considered best practice. However, in areas like Guanajuato where widespread distrust of the police exists, gaining public support can be a challenge.

In Guanajuato state, the proposed checkpoints in the city of León were initially unpopular due to perceptions of road police operations. Given the public's negative perceptions of road police, it was important that the road police and the alcohol checkpoints be seen as legitimate and working to advance public health. The MRCS believed that, given their strong reputation in Mexico, they could forge a partnership with the police that would encourage public acceptance, improve enforcement and save lives.

The Tactic

To aid in enforcement of the legislation, the MRCS's Guanajuato State branch decided to offer their expertise and volunteers to support the police checkpoints. Working with the local police in León, the MRCS set up a schedule that would begin in May 2014 and continue for a year during every weekend. Each checkpoint would be "staffed" by a team of MRCS volunteers working alongside officers. The volunteers received introductory training about drink driving and how the law was being implemented and enforced. To increase visibility, the volunteers had an ambulance stationed at the checkpoints.

The partnership was formally launched at a press conference held in May to "kick-off" the campaign, educate the public about drink driving statistics, and bring visibility to the initiative. Speakers included

CHECKLIST: Supporting road safety policy through effective implementation

- 1. Decide to engage in implementation efforts.** Civil society's role does not end with successful passage of legislation. Even after the policy is passed, your organisation still has an important role to play in implementation.
- 2. Develop and adopt regulations.** Work with appropriate government agencies to ensure that regulations and enforcement measures are strong and best represent and protect road users.
- 3. Educate the public and keep pressure on decision makers.** Civil society can play a critical role in letting the public know about new legislation and ensuring that government allocates resources for implementation.
- 4. Partner with the government to enforce the law.** Just as the MRCS partnered with local police, identify partnerships that can support agencies responsible for implementation. These partnership[s] might include monitoring, technical assistance, public outreach or other creative enforcement tactics.

Want to learn more? You can find other resources for advocates at www.grsroadsafety.org



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representatives from government police and traffic agencies, as well as the Red Cross. This diversity of voices confirmed to the public and the media that the effort was a united partnership between government and civil society.

Over the next year, the volunteer-staffed checkpoints helped to increase public support for the checkpoints, as well improve enforcement. Other unexpected benefits of the program included several cases in which volunteers were able to provide first aid to both police and drivers.

The Wrap-Up

Strong enforcement of road legislation requires public and political support, and civil society, including the Red Cross Red Crescent, can help to build and maintain that support. In this case, Red Cross volunteers increased legitimacy of an enforcement campaign and helped gain public support through a creative partnership with the government to save lives.