Abstract: Road safety as a global problem and a multisectoral system requires constant monitoring and coordination of all key stakeholders dealing with road safety improvement. In middle-income and undeveloped countries, the problem of road safety has not been sufficiently recognised. The reason for that is the lack of interest of local political leaders and other stakeholders who bear the responsibility for road unsafety and for settling this problem. In order to overcome that, it is necessary to strengthen the road safety profession of employees in local communities. By strengthening professions, the increase of the level of activism in local communities is directly affected, creating prerequisites for “willingness to pay” for road safety. To this purpose, a workshop (training) cycle of employees at local level has been organised for the second time in the Republic of Srpska aimed at approaching the problem of road unsafety and presenting main guidelines for a successful road safety management. The objective of this study is to present successful practice of strengthening the institutional capacity, with regard to possible workshop improvement measures and limitations that may appear in practice.

Keywords: institutional strengthening, profession, training, local community

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Literature review

The importance of road safety (hereinafter: RS) management both at national and local level was emphasised through the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2010-2020 (WHO, 2010). All the activities were systematised in five pillars. The first pillar – RS management and organisation, includes also the strengthening of profession and professionalism in RS, which speaks of the importance of this system solution towards RS improvement.
Lipovac et al. (2010a, 2010b) developed the obligations of local self-government units (hereinafter: LSG) in the implementation of the Road Traffic Safety Law (ZoBS). However, in the implementation of obligations, in all LSGs, there is a problem of law level of activism. The situation is even worse in those local governments where there is activism amongst unprofessionals in RS (Lipovac et al. 2014). Most of the problems occur in the area of financing, as the willingness to pay amongst political leaders at local level is undeveloped. The consequence of such a situation is an unprofessional and ad hoc “engagement” in RS, the inability to define quality and efficient measures, lack of monitoring of the effects of implemented measures, spending modest financial and other resources on countermeasures that lead to none or at least not the largest effects etc.

Various concepts of RS management have been applied around the world. The results are almost identical: only a coordinated action of stakeholders can contribute to a higher level of road safety (Bekefi, T. 2006; Bourgondien, M. 2012 and CARRS, 2011). The importance of a multisectoral approach in RS was pointed out by Klein, R. (2009) amongst the others.

Numerous projects have been realised around the world related to the institutional capacity building, in the countries such as Sweden, Norway, Ghana, Kenya, China, Australia, Mali and others. SIDA (2005) presented a project of institutional sustainability and capacity development in Sweden. The project was implemented in several states, with different social structure, level of socio-economic development, culture, mentality, organisational structure etc. The effects of the project are very noticeable and positive. It would be a huge challenge to create a political willingness, as well as a global, regional and national management and allocation of resources necessary for a successful implementation of recommendations from the World Report in order to achieve improved results.

Thomas, R. (2007) points to the responsibility of the state in all aspects of road safety. It is the state that plans, designs, builds, leads and maintains a large part of the road structure, adopts and implements RS laws, prescribes procedures for training and obtaining driver’s licences, procedure and manages state programmes to encourage safe behaviour in traffic. Given the scope of these activities, the state employs thousands of road safety professionals and therefore, must play a central role in efforts to develop the RS profession and professionalism.

Elvik R. at al. 2008 believes that a successful road safety management is facilitated in terms of objectives if the following conditions are met:

- Top government should strongly support the goals and be firmly committed to their implementation;
- Goals should be challenging, but also achievable in principle;
- There should not be a set of many goals, bearing in mind the available political instruments for their implementation;
- There should be a progress monitoring system focused on the implementation of objectives and providing feedback to the relevant ministries on their performance (benchmarking) and
- There should be initiatives and secure sources of funding, in order to guarantee the involvement of all stakeholders responsible for the implementation of goals.

1.2. Research objective

A project was initiated in the Republic of Srpska aimed at the improvement of profession and professionalism among employees at the local level entitled “Strengthening the Capacity of
Local Governments in Road Safety in the Republic of Srpska”, starting in 2013. The project is continuous and there is a tendency to organise it in this area every year.

The main objective is to promote good practice in road safety management, as well as to raise awareness about profession and professionals in this field. This model of professionalism among staff at national and local level can be applied in other scientific fields, which will contribute to a more efficient use of resources and better results.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

The Republic of Srpska has a good basis for RS improvement. The Traffic Safety Council was established, as well as the Road Traffic Safety Agency, whilst the “Road Safety Strategy of the Republic of Srpska 2013-2023” and the “Road Safety Programme of the Republic of Srpska” were adopted. About 160 people die on the roads in the Republic of Srpska, while more than 3,200 sustain injuries. Due to traffic accidents, the Republic of Srpska’s economy loses over 174 million KM (about 90 million Euros) per year (over 2% GDP), (Research results of the Banja Luka Faculty of Economics). Therefore, it is necessary to take urgent actions to reduce casualties and the above-given economic costs.

The Road Traffic Safety Agency of the Republic of Srpska has recognised the importance of RS professionalism at the local level, it has identified the lack of professionals and lack of commitment to road safety, all in conjunction with a low level of knowledge and awareness about road safety. The Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Governance of the Republic of Srpska (within the United Nations Development Programme) together with the Republic of Srpska’s Road Traffic Safety Agency, based on the priorities identified in the Strategy of training for local government employees in the Republic of Srpska, organised continuous training on the extent and type of RS problems, on global trends, on the importance of a strategic approach to the RS management, on the importance of making spatial road accident maps based on local database on road accidents and fatalities, etc.

The training was conducted in 4 centres: Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Istočno Sarajevo and Trebinje, including municipalities that gravitate towards these centres in accordance with the agreed programme of training. The first cycle of training was conducted from May to September 2013. Seminars were organised for a period of 6 hours (from 10:00 to 16:00 h), based on a special programme. The subject of the first cycle of training was: “Road Safety Strategy and Programme for the Area of Local Self-Governament”. The training was aimed at presenting guidelines for the development of local road safety strategies and programmes, as a basis for a serious road safety monitoring and management. All presentations were interactive with the aim of helping local communities in the development of their strategic documents.

The second cycle of training was organised in September 2014. The training involved the same area (4 centres) and the duration was limited to eight hours per day. The subject of the second cycle of training was: “Modern Road Safety Monitoring Methods in Local Communities”. On this occasion, the participants were familiarised with the importance and types of road safety monitoring. The emphasis was given to the development of an action plan with financial framework of each local community and the database design, which is important for road safety improvement (guidelines, procedures, data collection, data selection, application and software, the appearance of database on road accidents, violations, possibilities for analysis, reports etc.).

The training consisted of two parts: theoretical and practical- interactive approach.

The theoretical part comprised the presentation of material closely related to the topic of the workshop itself, primarily to the following: methods, processes and procedures for road safety improvement, road safety management methods, procedures and guidelines for the
development of database and benchmarking-based implemented activities in the field of “Road Safety Management and Coordination of Stakeholders”. The interactive part of the training referred to filling out the questionnaire (benchmarking) and presenting short-term and long-term goals of the pillar which was the subject of analysis.

During the first, as well as the second cycle of workshops, the speakers were professors and experts in the field of road safety. Trainees were heads of departments with their purview into road safety /traffic affairs, officers in the local government of the Republic of Srpska dealing with road safety issues and representatives of automobile associations. Seminar participants improved their practical knowledge about road safety and road safety management at the local level.

3. RESULTS

Holding workshops in local self-government units is of great importance for the development of road safety management system in the Republic of Srpska. By holding the above workshops the following common goals were achieved:

- Activities of local governments in the past year were summarised,
- Trainees enhanced their theoretical and practical knowledge about road safety,
- Trainees were familiarised with the way RS system evaluation works in local governments (benchmarking pillar I, database establishment and development),
- Local government representatives acquired basic knowledge about the importance and possibilities of RS management,
- Trainees were familiarised with guidelines for defining the desired condition,
- Trainees recognised the great local capacities for RS improvement,
- Guidelines were presented for the development of local databases,
- A method was presented for selecting important information that must be extracted from local databases on road accidents and fatalities,
- Programmes/applications were presented in which a database is developed,
- Activities were initiated at the preparation of local road safety strategy and programme in all local governments, whereas some local governments have started activities on establishing a database on road accidents and
- The exchange of experience and the identification of common problems were enabled between local governments.

A total of 29 self-government units from the area of the Republic of Srpska took active participation in the work of the workshops. During the exchange of experience among participants, problems that “emerged” can be systematised in several categories as follows:

- Poor implementation dynamics of LSG obligations in accordance with the Republic of Srpska’s Road Traffic Safety Law (63/11),
- Lack of coordination between stakeholders doing the same jobs,
- Lack of understanding of the problem of road unsafety,
- None or very poor level of willingness to invest in RS,
- Low level of activism in activities that do not require significant financial resources,
- Failure to recognise the responsibilities of key stakeholders in the RS system.

The other form of assistance to LSG aimed at road safety implementation is a distribution of printed manuals to all LSGs (a pdf. version of manual can be downloaded at:
www.absrs.org), consisting of methods, procedures, guidelines etc. displayed and presented at the workshops.

Trainings in LSGs should be continued in the next period, in cooperation with the Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Governments and the Association of Municipalities and Towns. Trainings should be more numerous and seminars should be lasting several days. Only in this way basic conditions can be created for active participation of LSGs in the process of RS management, strengthening of profession and acquisition of professionals in this field together with achieving continuous RS in local communities etc.

The main and essential purpose of these workshops is the promotion of profession as a key for an easier and more effective implementation of activities to improve road safety.

Monitoring of results of profession and professionalism reinforcement has been enabled by continuous evaluation of basic criteria that are important for RS management at LSG level. The results are public.

4. DISCUSSION

Key partners for global road safety agree that now is the right moment for an accelerated investment in road safety in undeveloped and middle-income countries, as well as for the development of sustainable road safety strategies and programmes, which would examine the attitude of road users, encourage the use of public transport and change the approach to measuring national progress in transport policy.

The RS problem should not be viewed only at national level. This is a regional, local and individual problem, i.e. RS is a multisectoral system. Taking this fact into account, it can be concluded that no significant results would be achieved in terms of road safety management at the national level without the support of LSGs.

National institutional capacity for RS management is directly related to the existence of local capacity to manage this problem. If such a capacity existed, it would be possible to realise vertical activities without additional effort and all the attention could be focused on addressing and implementing short and long-term goals.

The biggest problem a country, region or LSG could be exposed to is the lack of understanding for road safety (or any other scientific discipline) problem-solving, for the implementation of successful practice (experience of other countries which led to outstanding results). These problems occur exclusively where there is a lack of experts, science and experience. Unfortunately, the Republic of Srpska and the countries in the region have this problem that can be overcome by strengthening the institutional capacity and RS profession.

Trainings, seminars and workshops intended to strengthen professionalism and professionals are very important and indispensable factor in improving any scientific branch. As long as there is a lack of expertise among stakeholders carrying out activities, it is very difficult to expect positive results. Therefore, the government, the academic and professional community (associations of citizens, unions and the like) should invest efforts to have the “right, professional people working at the right places”.

By institutional development and strengthening of capacities, a significant number of people who work every day with road safety issues and are committed “full time” to RS improvement will be employed. Thus, the stronger level of professionalism is created in important institutions, in local governments, i.e. a position of general public towards RS is improved. This will contribute to a better commitment, better use of existing capacities, strengthening of capacity and integrity of institutions and individuals, increase of willingness to pay in RS etc.
Cooperation of all stakeholders in the RS system is of essential importance for the development of multi-disciplinary RS profession and RS improvement. Involvement and cooperation of competent people for traffic affairs in LSG, police, fire services, emergency services, representatives of driving schools, preschool institutions and schools, automobile associations and other RS system stakeholders is a sign of positive will and consciousness of a local government that wants to face the problem of road sufferings of its citizens.

Due to various problems faced by LSGs in the Republic of Srpska, it is very important to set aside some funds for the realisation of activities at RS improvement. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to take into account the costs of traffic accidents. Applying the analysis of investment/profit (cost-benefit analysis) we will easily come to the conclusion that the investment in RS is not an expense, but a multiple benefit. By applying such an approach, i.e. by justifying the investment in RS, it is necessary to approach decision-makers in order to ensure continuous and effective willingness to pay.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Strengthening of profession and professionalism will contribute to the institutional strengthening of every LSG in any sphere of life, thus providing a higher level of attention focused on solving specific problems and creating better living conditions for the citizens. Road safety as a multisectoral system requires the highest level of coordination among key stakeholders at RS improvement.

In order to determine the level of success and efficiency of our management measures, it is necessary to constantly monitor our plans (our targets) and what we have done. This is done by benchmarking of activities within all the “pillars” envisaged by the Global Plan of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2010-2020. One of the main goals of benchmarking is to achieve an agreement of LSG representatives on the evaluation of implemented activities (current status establishment). The point is to give as realistic a picture as possible of the current situation in the field of RS, which provides the best possible enforcement of management measures for the promotion of the establishment of a database on planned and achieved objectives of each LSG in the Republic of Srpska.

During this cycle of workshops, only “the first pillar” of activities was analysed, precisely because that is where the largest number of problems pertaining to the lack of activism in LSGs is hidden. In this regard, future workshops or trainings should be directed to the analysis of all pillars individually, however with a constant reference to the activities from the “first pillar”.

Furthermore, the evaluation (the level of implementation of specific activities) that the participants brought to the workshop, should be taken with some reserve. The reason is that the workshop programme did not allow a huge discussion on this issue. This problem can be overcome in two ways: 1) by organising multi-day workshops with a large number of participants from LSGs, and 2) by organising workshops in some LSGs, which will host only the key RS stakeholders in that particular LSG.

6. REFERENCES


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