

BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES BY OPENING THE STREETS OF INDIAN CITIES





ABOUT OPEN STREETS

Open streets temporarily repurpose city streets into car-free spaces for people complemented by programmed activities fulfilling the intent of the programme. These programmes include encouraging physical activity, civic engagement, local economic development, community development, recovery and revitalisation of public spaces and changing transportation behaviour through walking and cycling advocacy. Open streets also facilitate increased interactions among neighbours, which can strengthen community resilience and improve well-being. It also contributes towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including:

- SDG 3 : Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- SDG 10 : Reduce inequality within and among countries, and
- SDG 11 : Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.



BACKGROUND

ESAF started street level interventions in Bengaluru in 2013. On October 27, 2013, ESAF Foundation jointly with the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) of Government of Karnataka (GoK), the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), and the PrajaRaag introduced **Cycle Day** under the banner of Bengaluru Coalition for Open Streets (BCOS) to transform Bengaluru through cycling and open street events.

In 2014, ESAF pioneered **World Car-free Day** in Thrissur, Kerala with the support of City Police, Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), and National Transportation Planning and Research Centre (NATPAC). This event turned out to be a huge success in the initial year itself. The success of the first World Car-free Day event led to organising mega events in different cities in the following years.

In 2015, 2016, and 2019, **World Car-free Day** events were successfully organised in Bengaluru, Nagpur, Thrissur, Kochi, and Malappuram cities with the support of the government and other partners. The Kochi Municipal Corporation, City Police Malappuram, Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) of Karnataka, Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC), Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), NATPAC, Department of Tourism Kerala, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, Tourism Department Bengaluru, Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRL), Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC), Karnataka Pollution Control Board, BCOS Cycle Day, Bengaluru Traffic Police, and Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) were some of the organising partners of these events.



2013



2014



2015 - 16



In 2019, ESAF introduced **Open Streets** events in Guwahati for the first time and these events garnered the support of the Guwahati Police Department, the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC).

In 2020, ESAF achieved a significant milestone by being officially included as one of the major stakeholders in Thrissur City by the Department of Town and Country Planning, Government of Kerala to develop a **Masterplan for Traffic and Transportation**.

In 2021, ESAF was appointed as a Member in the Executive Committee by the Thrissur Municipal Corporation to implement **UNESCO Learning City Thrissur** initiatives. The Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), and the Government Engineering College Thrissur (GEC) were the other prominent players supporting the city government in organising street events under this initiative.

In 2022, ESAF and the Thrissur Municipal Corporation successfully hosted an open streets event titled **Family - Friendly Thrissur 2022**, under the banner of 'UNESCO Learning City' at Municipal Office Road in Thrissur City.



2020



2021



2022



2019













ESAF
ESAF FOUNDATION

Pedal
for a
Change

Open Streets

GUWAHATI



19th March 2023



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cyclo
plant



AstraZeneca

DECATHLON



POLICY IMPACT OF OPEN STREETS

Establishing our footprints across India

ESAF's policy-level interventions through open streets organised over the last eight years helped in the inclusion of 'car-free days and vehicle-free zones' into the **Parking Policy**, developed by the Department of Town and Country Planning, Government of Kerala, and the Thrissur Municipal Corporation, as different public awareness strategies to curb existing traffic woes in the city. It was the 1st ever move by any city government in India to have included such campaigns in their Parking Policy. Also, two street segments in Thrissur City, Kerala, were included in the **Master Plan for Thrissur City 2039** for converting these streets into vehicle-free zones.

Cycle Day initiatives in Bengaluru with the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) resulted in the implementation of three neighbourhood improvement plans, 125 kilometres of cycle tracks (125 km), and a full-fledged public bike sharing (PBS) system at 345 places to encourage walking and cycling in Bengaluru, Mysore, and Gadag. At the Public Bike Sharing (PBS) system launch in Bengaluru on March 3, 2019, the Government of Karnataka recognised ESAF for its efforts to promote cycling in the city's neighbourhoods and educational institutions, on the advice of DULT Bengaluru and the state's Urban Development Department. ESAF was a planning and implementing member of a pop-up bicycle lane planned for 17 kilometres along the Outer Ring Road of Bengaluru.



ESAF was a partner in the **Sustainable Mobility Accords (SuMA)** programme initiated by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) in Bengaluru in September 2020 to transform Cycle Day into measurable engagement for creating sustainable neighbourhoods.

ESAF was part of the **Church Street First** initiative launched by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) of the Government of Karnataka (GoK) on November 7, 2020, a pilot project to test the impact of traffic closures at Bengaluru's Church Street. Under the Clean Air Initiative, the Church Street in Bengaluru was closed to vehicular traffic on an experimental basis every Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to midnight for four months, from November 7, 2020 till February 28, 2021. This initiative was to reprioritise clean mobility and demonstrate the positive impact of streets focused on people and sustainable behaviours. The **Church Street First** provided the opportunity to trial and refine street designs and created a blueprint for other streets across Bengaluru and India as a whole. More projects are planned, including at Gandhi Bazaar, Malleswaram 8th Cross and at Commercial Street.

The Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) of Karnataka, which oversees all transportation-related projects in the state's urban planning zones, approved ESAF's proposal to install bicycle stands in government schools in Bengaluru, taking into account the public's interest in Cycle Days. Of the 75 schools proposed by ESAF, the DULT has installed bicycle stands in 32 government schools in Bengaluru Urban.

ESAF's partnership with the Nagpur Smart and Sustainable City Development Corporation Limited (NSSCDCL) has led to the launch of a campaign titled **Place Making 2.0** to redesign the street in Mahal Market, Nagpur, to make it pedestrian-friendly. This was an attempt by the NSSCDCL, the Smart Cities Mission, the ESAF Foundation and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) of the Government of India to reclaim spaces from vehicles and give them back to people.



Between 2013 and 2023, a total of 17 mega open-street events and 467 cycle days were organised in five Indian cities, including Guwahati, Bengaluru, Nagpur, Thrissur, Kochi, and Malappuram. Cycle Day initiatives have been published as one of the best practices in international publications, particularly by the UN (2017 & 2018) and WHO (2019). In addition to changing government policy, these open-street activities have resulted in provisions in city master plans for turning streets into car-free zones. The necessity of establishing streets as hubs for placemaking became more apparent to decision-makers in four Indian states because of these street events.



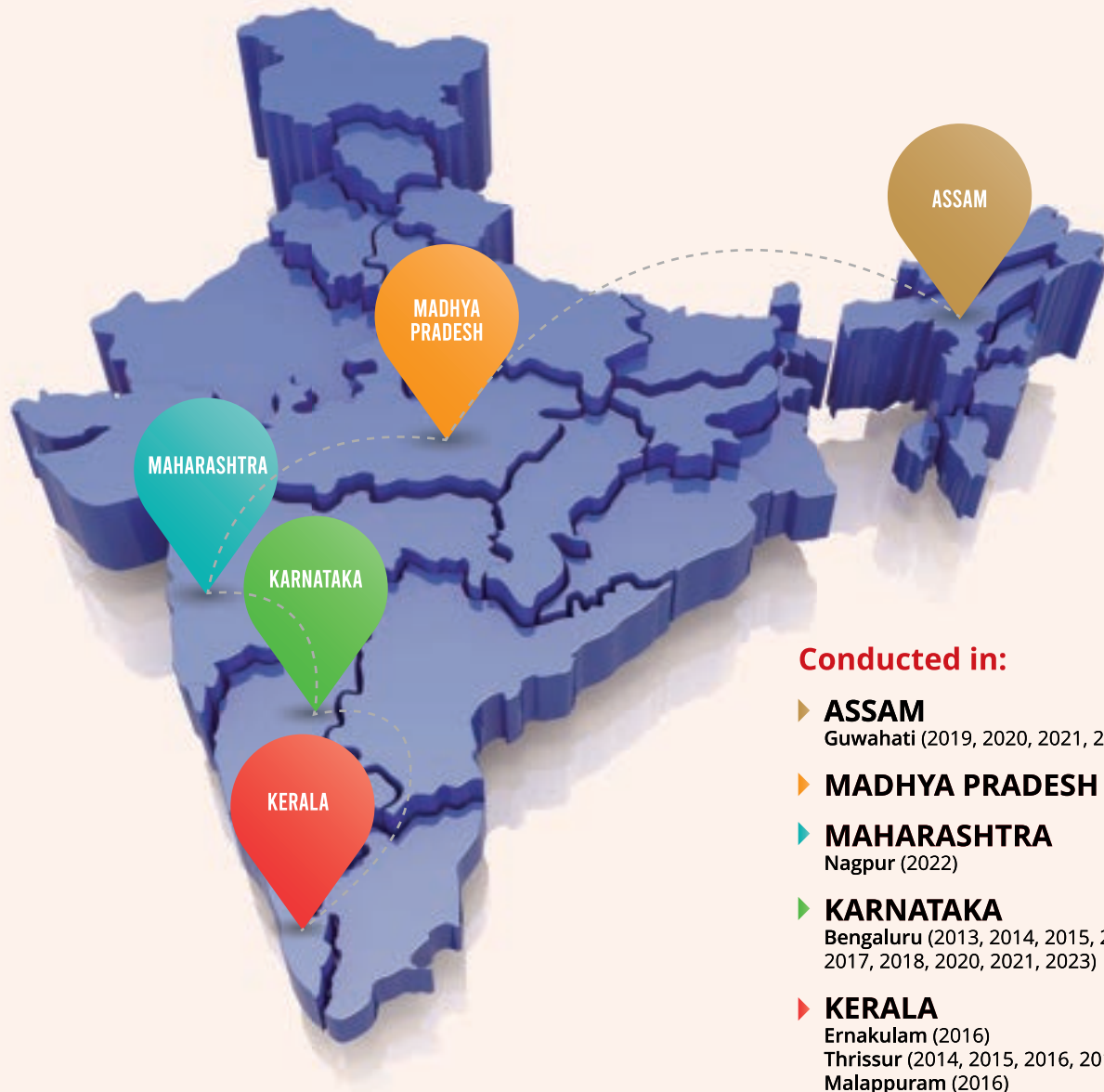


OPEN STREETS

Journey that started in 2013

CYCLE DAY'S - 467

**WORLD CAR-FREE DAY'S &
OPEN STREETS - 17**



Conducted in:

- ▶ **ASSAM**
Guwahati (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023)
- ▶ **MADHYA PRADESH**
- ▶ **MAHARASHTRA**
Nagpur (2022)
- ▶ **KARNATAKA**
Bengaluru (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023)
- ▶ **KERALA**
Ernakulam (2016)
Thrissur (2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2022)
Malappuram (2016)

WHO WE ARE



ESAF Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation formed as a response to the various development gaps in society. Driven by the vision to build a just and fair society, our interventions are based on an integrated development model focusing on creating livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged. Since its inception in 1992, ESAF has birthed more than 18 entities that are transforming the lives of the poor and the marginalised across the country. ESAF is one among the pioneers to form women self-help groups and popularise microfinance towards financial inclusion and economic empowerment of the poor in India. Our interventions are aimed at creating livelihood opportunities for the target group. ESAF has impacted more than 5 million lives through its different social entities. We also partner with government agencies, community bodies, national and international donors, and leading corporate houses to deliver lasting change to the poor and marginalised, especially women, children, and people living with disabilities.

ESAF's Livable Cities is one of the significant projects implemented in 2008 with the technical support of HealthBridge Foundation of Canada to address the accessibility of public spaces, streets, and public markets in Indian cities through research and policy advocacy with city governments. Open streets are one of the flagship campaigns initiated under this project to liaise with the government for drafting policies to encourage car-free streets and vehicle-free zones for placemaking.



GEOGRAPHIC REACH OF ESAF LIVABLE CITIES







FAMILY-FRIENDLY THRISSUR 2022

It was in 2021 that the City of Thrissur earned the recognition of **UNESCO Learning City** from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) after becoming one of India's first entrants into the **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)**. ESAF is an official member in the Executive Committee led by the Thrissur Municipal Corporation to oversee the implementation of **UNESCO Learning City Thrissur** initiatives.



On November 20, 2022, the ESAF Foundation and the Thrissur Municipal Corporation strategically planned and executed an Open Streets event under the banner of **UNESCO Learning City** at Municipal Office Road in Thrissur City. The Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and the School of Architecture and Planning of Government Engineering College Thrissur teamed up as knowledge partners. This was the first open streets event endorsed by an Urban Local Body (ULB) in Kerala since the events began in 2015.

To ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, skaters, and individuals participating in various social activities such as chess and badminton, M. O. Road was closed to traffic. The **Family Friendly Thrissur 2022** event, an initiative of Thrissur Learning City, aimed to raise awareness about the necessity of prioritising people over cars

while redesigning urban spaces, offering easy access to recreational and health-oriented activities, and encouraging local economic growth by supporting the local population.

The goal of this initiative was to bring people from all walks of life together and present them with a variety of leisure activities at various areas across Swaraj Round. This was also the first time in the region that an Urban Local Body (ULB) initiated efforts to create family-friendly streets. The Municipal Corporation was able to spread awareness of this programme across the state of Kerala by collaborating with other government agencies, civil society organisations, and technical specialists in the sector, as well as publicising it in visual and textual media.

















CONCLUSION

ESAF's Open Streets initiative has significantly changed the role of streets in nine Indian cities in the last ten years. Communities have rediscovered the potential of streets as a place for gathering, exercising, dining, and more. What was once considered a public asset, occupied solely by cars, is now being considered for more adaptable uses that could benefit local communities.



PARTNER AGENCIES







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