

Can the Safe System model realistically
be transferred to LMIC contexts with
lower Safe System readiness
And if not, what then?

A small wins pathway for road safety management

PHD TOR-OLAV NÆVESTAD

INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT ECONOMICS

NORWAY



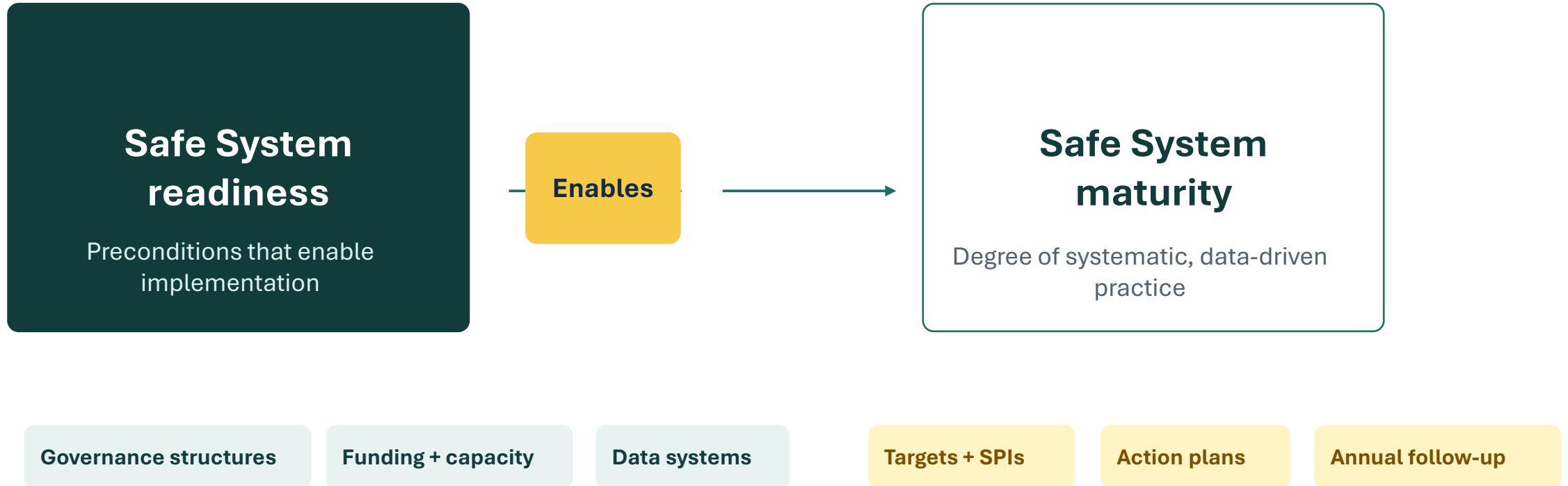
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Can the Safe System model realistically be transferred to LMIC contexts with lower Safe System readiness - and if not, what then?

Authors: Tor-Olav Nævestad^a, Enoch F. Sam^b, Haneen Farah^c, Daniel Mwamba^d, Jaqueline Masaki^e, Aliaksei Lareshyn^f, Matilda Magnusson^f, Ingeborg Hesjevoll^a, Andras Varhelyi^f, Rune Elvik^a, Jenny Blom^a, Thomas Miyoba^d, Anteneh Mekonnen^c, Filbert Francis^f, Lars E. Egner^a

The core distinction: readiness vs maturity

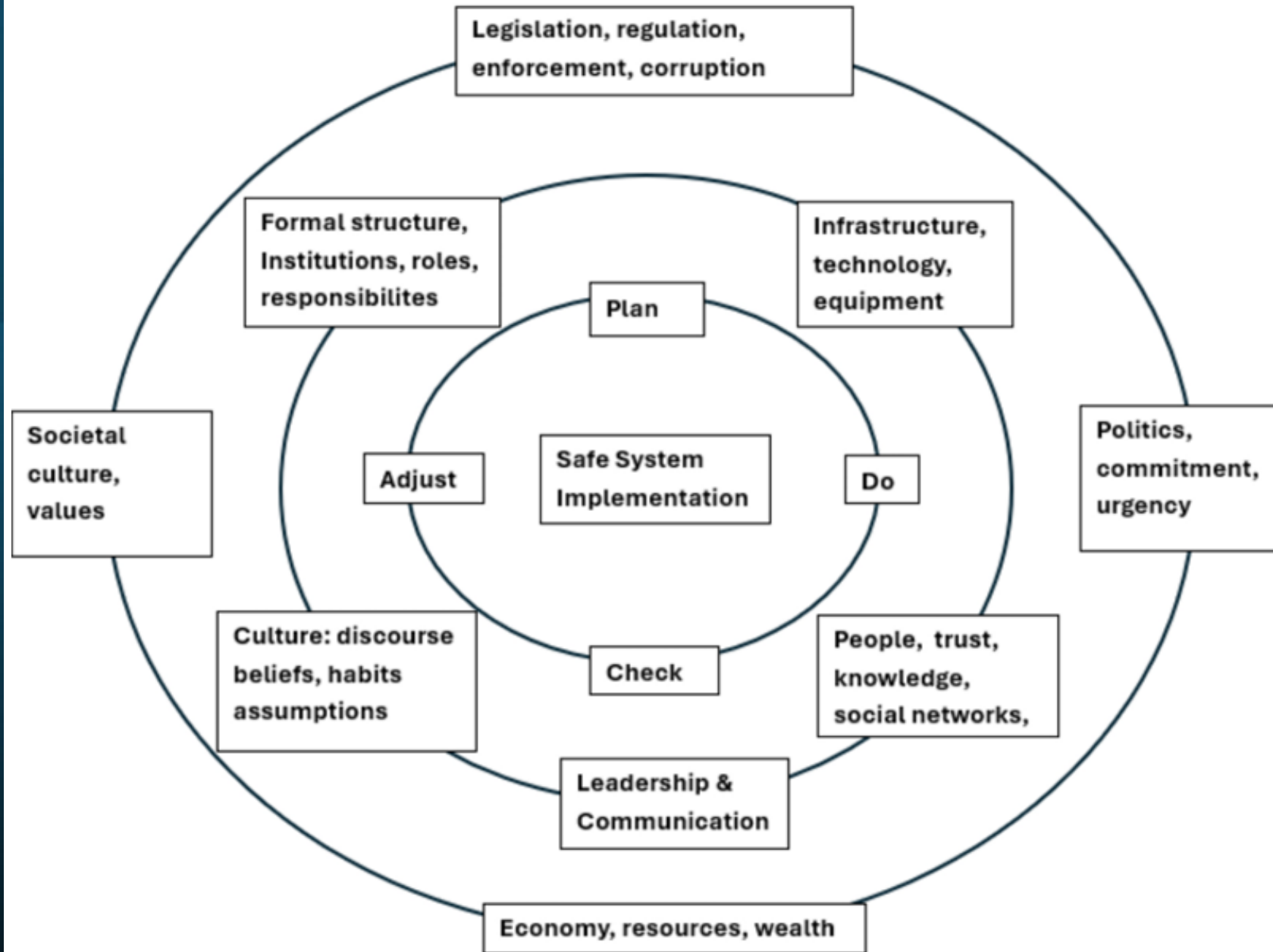
A country can formally adopt Safe System language without having the preconditions to operate it.



Core claim: limited readiness constrains comprehensive Safe System transfer.

Why is the implementation insufficient?

Development of a new model:



Full Safe System implementation requires readiness:

Full Safe System implementation might involve a full transformation of society, e.g. fighting corruption, improving economy, improving social conditions, strengthening institutions etc.

This top-down approach is a comprehensive task, we discuss a bottom-up approach.

The “small wins” approach (Weick 1984; Termeer and Dewulf (2019) may offer a more pragmatic pathway for advancing Safe System reforms in resource-constrained settings

E.g. small-scale successful pilots which may add up and lead to increased readiness.

Our focus is on national road safety management

In AfroSAFE WP2 we compared road safety management according to Safe System principles.

Then we issued recommendations, first general.

Then recommendations given readiness constraints.

Participative workshops with national road safety stakeholders: Ghana 14 | Tanzania 11 | Zambia 19

Focus: Coproduction: how can we make the recommendations relevant?

Q1) Given the readiness constraints, what can be done to improve data quality?

Q2) If we should apply the PDCA cycle to one challenge, which should it be?

Safe System comparison and participative workshops

The study compared mature Safe System contexts with emerging African contexts, then asked stakeholders how recommendations could be made realistic.



Photo: Zambia Road Safety Trust

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Road safety stakeholders

Ghana 14 | Tanzania 11 | Zambia 19

Workshops asked how recommendations could work under real constraints.



European leaders

Norway | Sweden | Netherlands

African contexts

Ghana | Tanzania | Zambia

Participative workshops: Q1) Given the readiness constraints, what can be done to improve data quality?

Participants suggested data-focused small wins and priority safety problems.



DATA SMALL WINS

- **Community watch** increase local crash reporting
- **Train journalists** improve crash reporting quality
- **AI + social media** find unreported crashes online
- **Data harmonisation** link police, health and registry data

Q2) If we should apply the PDCA cycle to one challenge, which should it be?

Vulnerable road users | Motorcycles | Speed

In the paper, we analyse these suggestions in light of the Small Wins approach:

Hypothetical mechanisms, which provide a language for analysing gradual change.

Mechanisms through which Safe System readiness gradually may increase.

1) Motivation building (energizing)

- Wicked problems may generate paralysis, reform fatigue, and fatalism (e.g. corruption, institutional fragility, scarce resources).
- Small wins counteract this by producing visible and tangible improvements within a limited domain.
- Typically through small successful pilots.
- People may learn that change is possible in spite of factors impeding Safe System readiness.

2) Learning

- Small wins facilitate gradual learning through experimentation.
- Actors may implement limited interventions, observe outcomes, and adjust accordingly.
- Rather than attempting to design a full and comprehensive Safe System.
- Over time, repeated experimentation may strengthen technical competence, administrative routines, and problem-solving capacity.
- This accumulated learning may contribute to gradual increases in institutional capability, thereby increasing Safe System readiness.

3) The logic of attraction/Coalition formation

- Visible results of individual small wins may signal progress and reduce perceived risk,
- Actors may be more likely to commit efforts and mobilise additional resources.
- In this way «cooperation models», trust and social capital may form.

4) Bandwagon effect

- Small wins may inspire others to see specific alternative ways of organizing would look like, and they may imitate or adopt it.
- If small wins occur at the same time in different places, they may become part of a broader movement for transformative change.

5) Coupling

- Termeer and Dewulf (2019) also add that small wins may accumulate when they combine with other events across boundaries of policy systems and scales.
- E.g. a new 30 km/h limit nearby a school, becomes more important when it connects with other developments, e.g.
 - police increase speed enforcement,
 - the road authority updates its design guidelines,
 - parents' groups campaign for safer school zones, and
 - national road safety targets emphasize Vision Zero.

6) Norm-shifting (cultural change/reframing)

- When small wins become numerous, they may lead to sustained change.
- Norm shifting means that repeated small successes gradually change perceptions of normal or expected management practices.
- Over time, practices that were initially experimental may become expected components of administrative conduct.

7) Institutionalization (structural change)

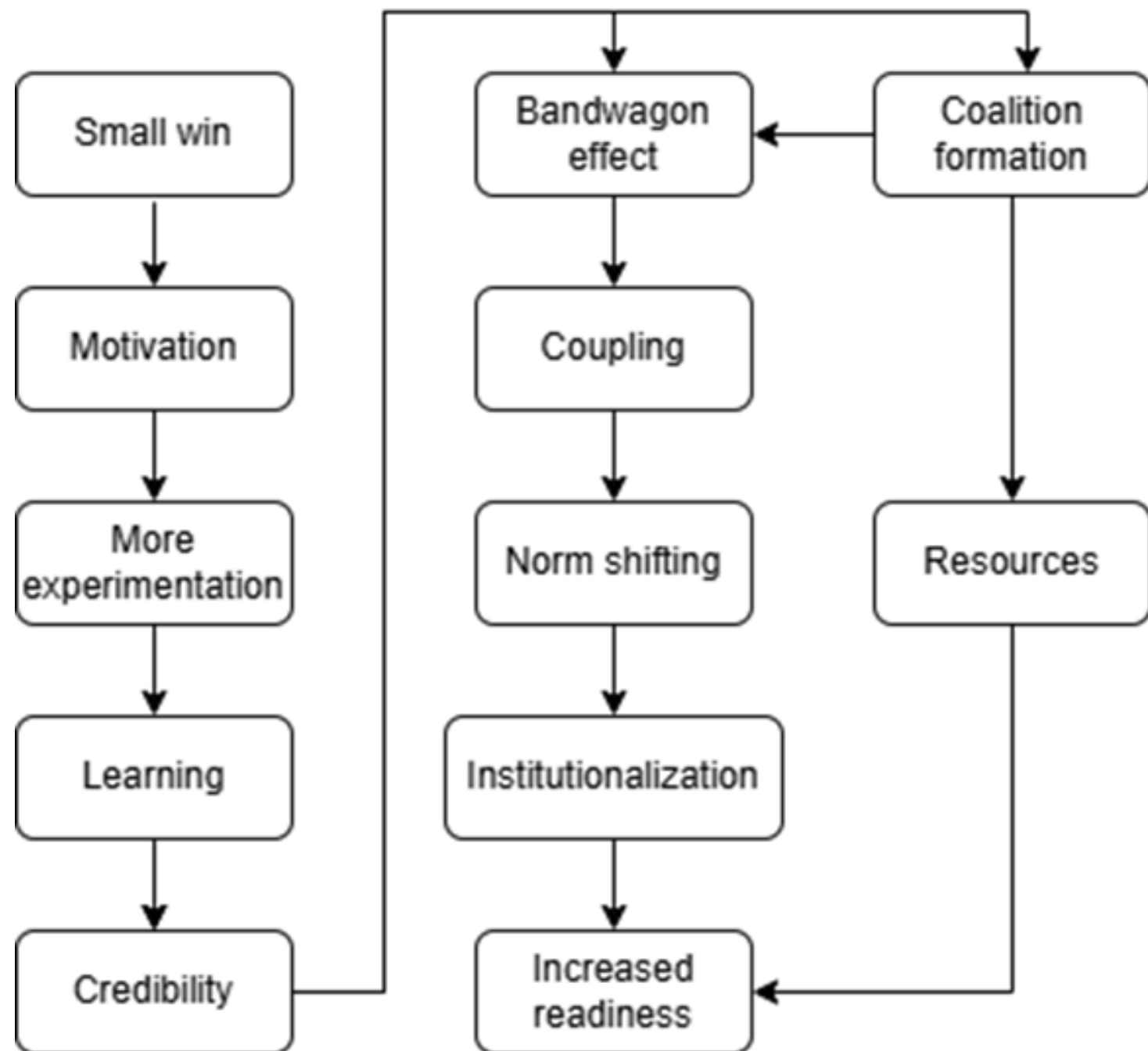
- For small wins to produce durable change, they must become embedded in formal structures and routines.
- E.g codified in policy documents, incorporated into budgets, assigned to designated units, and integrated into reporting procedures.
- This may transform episodic success into stable governance capacity.
- This = final stages of readiness development, where institutional arrangements increase systemic readiness for more comprehensive Safe System implementation.

What does the the Small Wins approach give us?

It provides a language for analysing gradual change.

We can use the mechanisms to describe changes that have happened, or which may occur.

When we are aware of the change mechanisms, we may record them, influence them and modify them.



Summing up:

- **Incremental, feasible, and locally embedded interventions can:**
 - build learning capacity,
 - improve data practices,
 - enhance coordination, and
 - generate political and institutional momentum.
- **Over time, the accumulation of such small-scale improvements may increase Safe System readiness and thereby expand the scope for more comprehensive Safe System implementation.**

Thank you for your attention!

ton@toi.no



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