Global Road Safety - Fact Sheet

At a Glance

Road traffic injuries kill nearly 1.3 million people a year and are the leading or second leading cause of death among youths and young adults worldwide. Around 90 percent of road crashes occur in low- and middle-income countries. With GDP loss per country pegged at between 1-3%, the economic and social cost of this epidemic can exceed the amount of overseas aid coming in to countries. Hospital systems are clogged with traffic victims, straining scarce medical resources. Without strong social safety nets to compensate victims or their families, road traffic injuries can thrust aspiring generations into a cycle of poverty.

In an effort to alter the status quo, a UN Decade of Action for Road Safety was launched on May 11, 2011, with a goal of preventing 5 million road traffic deaths and 50 million serious injuries globally by 2020. The UN Road Safety Collaboration has developed a Global Plan of Action that provides an overall framework for activities during the Decade.

Yet, in many parts of the world road safety institutions remain weak and seriously under-resourced, presenting a formidable barrier to progress. To prevent the global road safety crisis from worsening substantially over the next decade, the World Bank is helping its client countries make determined and coordinated commitments to take ownership of the problem and improve their road safety outcomes.

Context

- Road safety is a global public health crisis, and fast becoming an obstacle to economic development for many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Taken globally, road injuries killed 1.3 million people in 2010 and were the eighth leading cause of death, according to the findings of the recently published 2010 Global Burden of Disease, an unprecedented epidemiological estimate of 150 major health conditions conducted by the International Health & Metrics Institute.
- Not everyone is affected equally. Among males, traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for the 15-24 year old age group, and second cause of death for young adults aged 25-39. Injury rates are also highest and rising in the poorest regions of the world, in contrast with high-income regions with a long history of road safety programs, most of which have seen fatalities and serious injuries steadily decline over the last three decades.
- Beyond the enormous personal suffering they cause, road traffic injuries place a huge strain on health care systems, and challenge development objectives. Across low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where 90% of fatal crashes occur, losses due to traffic injuries are estimated at US$100 billion per year. At national level, this aggregate translates into losses of 1-3% of GDP, a figure higher than many LMICs receive in development assistance.
- In an effort to alter the status quo, a UN Decade of Action for Road Safety was launched on May 11, 2011 supported by 80 countries, with a goal of preventing 5 million road traffic deaths and 50 million serious injuries globally by 2020. The launch of the Decade has energized governments to develop and implement national action plans to avert an even worse carnage.
- The UN Road Safety Collaboration has developed a Global Plan of Action that provides an overall framework for activities built around five "pillars": building road safety management capacity; improving the safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks; further developing the safety of vehicles; enhancing the behavior of road users; and improving post-crash care. In 2013, the Global Status Report on Road Safety provided a comprehensive, country-by-country, measure of performance across each of the pillars.
Strategy

- Effective road safety management is complex. Institutional collaboration is needed to achieve effective, sustainable interventions. In practice, this means ramping up capacity to implement solutions and managing road safety in a context where multiple agencies share responsibility.

- The World Bank acknowledges the magnitude of the road safety problem and is committed to working with client governments to determine specific road safety interventions and provide technical assistance for activities that increase their capacity to prepare, prioritize and implement cost-effective, multi-sectoral road safety programs. These efforts are translating into a new generation of interventions visible across an increasing number of country projects.

- The World Bank has established a Global Road Safety Facility to provide funding, knowledge, and technical assistance designed to leverage road safety investments in existing transport operations and scale-up the efforts of low- and middle-income countries to build their scientific, technological and managerial capacities. This is being achieved by guiding the process of elaborating country-specific responses to identified institutional weaknesses, improving systematic road infrastructure assessments at the design stage, designing interventions reliant on inter-agency coordination and supporting the improvement of data management systems.

- At the global level, the World Bank is committed to elevating road safety advocacy and building partnerships in support of raising road safety capacity management. The World Bank contributed to the launch of the UN Decade of Action and participates in the UN Road Safety Collaboration, alongside key stakeholders from government, industry and civil society.

- The World Bank has joined seven multilateral development banks, which together will account for approximately US$200 billion worth of road building investments during the Decade of Action, in committing to a shared program of global and regional road safety activities geared at accelerating knowledge transfer, strengthening institutional capacity and scaling up road safety investment.

Results

- Through an appraisal tool developed by the Global Road Safety Facility to guide the process of assessing institutional weaknesses, the World Bank has aided over 20 countries to prepare national strategies towards managing road safety. New multi-sectoral safety-focused projects have been implemented in countries such as Argentina, China, India, and Vietnam, with clear results evidenced by changes in legislation and improved statistics around particular risk factors such as speeding, seat belt and helmet wearing.

- The World Bank promotes safer road infrastructure design and is pioneering the use of Safety Ratings as an objective measure of the level of user risk. Through grants provided by the Facility to the International Road Assessment Program (iRAP), over 30,000 km of roads in 12 countries have been systematically inspected for life-saving engineering improvements.

- The World Bank has supported efforts to place road safety on the political agenda in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The project supported the creation of an innovative virtual platform, the Ibero-American Road Safety Observatory (OISEVI), which 22 countries use to exchange experiences and develop statistics to design effective policy solutions. In Argentina, the pilot country for reform, the results were important improvements in road safety indicators.


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