Building Capacity for Safer Roads
A worsening public health crisis

A development disaster in the making

Over the last decade, road safety has imposed itself as an unacceptable, and underfunded, international public health crisis, and an obstacle to sustainable development. With rapid urbanization and increasing motorization rates, low- and middle-income countries are confronted with a growing challenge to their public health systems and development objectives.

It is hard to overstate the magnitude of today’s road safety problem. Across low- and middle-income countries, where 90 percent of the world’s fatal road crashes occur, traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years, often tipping families into long term poverty and overwhelming emergency health care systems. As emerging economies urbanize and see their motorization rates skyrocket, they are increasingly confronted with a development disaster in the making. At present, however, political attention and projected funding levels for road safety still fall well short of global commitments to other diseases.

In an encouraging effort to alter the status quo, a UN Decade of Action for Road Safety was launched on May 11, 2011 in more than 100 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 around the world to develop national action plans and avert an even worse carnage.

Yet, the reality is that road safety institutions remain weak and seriously under-resourced, presenting a formidable barrier to progress. Unless country governments make determined and coordinated commitments to take ownership of the problem, the global road safety crisis could worsen substantially over the next decade.
Traffic injuries are the second leading cause of death for 5-14 year olds.
GRSF: at the heart of a global & coordinated response

United to halt death and injury on the road

The Global Road Safety Facility (GRSF), a global partnership program administered by the World Bank, was established in 2006 with a mission to help address the growing crisis of road traffic deaths and injuries in low- and middle-income countries. The Facility provides funding, knowledge, and technical assistance services with the aims of achieving sustainable results and leveraging investment opportunities in client countries.

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

Through the GRSF, the World Bank has joined seven other multilateral development banks (MDBs), 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.
“Noting also the important role of the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility as a funding mechanism to support capacity-building and provide technical support for road safety and as a means to increase the resources needed to address road safety in low- and middle-income countries, acknowledging the increase in funding to support national, regional and global road safety work.”

Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly

Low and Middle-Income Country Co-sponsors of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety
Helping countries implement appropriate strategies

The central issue addressed by the Facility is how to accelerate the process of shifting from weak to strong global, regional and country institutional capacity conducive to improved road safety results.

In developing countries, setting up good road safety practice is a challenge due to a variety of issues including weak agency capacity, insufficient funding, and absence of political will. Institution-building must take the highest priority as it is the foundation on which road safety management systems are established. A functioning and competent lead road safety agency can play a critical role in establishing good road safety practices in these countries.

The Facility has devised a comprehensive appraisal tool that guides the process of elaborating country- or region-specific responses to identified institutional weaknesses. Wherever possible, the resulting recommendations are incorporated into existing projects piloted by MDBs or operations supported by other sources of financing to generate new investment in road safety activity.
Advancing a new generation of multi-sector projects

Designing interventions reliant on inter-agency coordination

Road safety done well is complex. Institutional collaboration is needed to achieve effective interventions. In practice, this means managing road safety in a context where different government agencies - Transport, Health, Justice, Interior, Education, Employment, and Finance – share responsibility and stakeholder engagement is key.

With guidance from the Facility, countries have begun developing new intervention models that target high-risk corridors through multi-sectoral, evidence-based action led by Government in concert with civil society and the business sector. These corridors share the common goal of achieving lasting results through system-wide, collaborative programs and are encouraging examples of new road safety strategies that are aligned with Decade of Action objectives.

Health sector initiatives driven by the World Bank are also proving an equally vital conduit, when designed in tandem with the transport sector. The Facility encourages an active dialogue between the transport and health sectors in devising interventions that support capacity strengthening, improve data collection, and reform post-crash medical care.

A crucial ingredient for success over the Decade of Action will be effective and efficient road policing. The Facility is providing seed funding to the International Road Policing Organization (RoadPOL), a police engagement model designed to improve the governance of road safety enforcement in low- and middle-income countries.
Promoting safer road infrastructure

Target the roads that disproportionately kill and injure

Emerging economies are rapidly renovating and expanding their road networks to accommodate expanding vehicle fleets, intensified traffic mix and sustained growth in domestic trade. These new roads have enormous potential to stimulate economic growth and lift standards of living by providing faster access to employment, schools and markets. Yet, even newly built or rehabilitated roads can present risks when important safety considerations are omitted in the design, or left out in the construction & maintenance phases as and when funds run out.

Basic, well-known safety engineering measures on these roads can help mitigate these risks, protect vulnerable users and repay their investment, given the high economic cost of road crashes.
The Global Road Safety Facility is pioneering the use of Safety Ratings to provide an objective measure of the level of risk, and guide road engineers into safer design choices. The resulting safety investment programs specify the precise countermeasures that will be necessary, estimate the lives that will be saved and calculate a cost-benefit ratio to allow decision-makers to allocate resources effectively to secure a safe outcome. Through grants provided by the Facility to the International Road Assessment Program (iRAP), over 30,000 km of roads have been systematically inspected for life-saving engineering improvements.

The Facility has also supported the development of a free toolkit of road engineering countermeasures. Building on decades of road safety research, the Toolkit helps engineers, planners and policy makers develop safety plans for car occupants, motorcyclists, pedestrians, bicyclists, heavy vehicle occupants and public transport users.

The Facility works with project teams to ensure that recommendations from these assessments are incorporated into project documents and that client road agencies are assisted through capacity building activities to implement the recommendations and mainstream road safety assessments into the development and maintenance of their road networks.
Advancing road safety knowledge

A focus on reliable data systems

Reliable estimates of the incidence and burden of road injuries supported by a vibrant research program are essential inputs for improved road safety leadership and national strategies for low- and middle-income countries. There is an urgent need for analytical tools that can be used to derive reasonable estimates from a wide range of existing sources, including hospital records, police records, health surveys, death registers, among many others.

The Global Road Safety Facility supports the development of key global metrics to identify new ways to estimate road crash data in information-poor settings. As part of the 2010 Global Burden of Disease and Injury Study, Harvard University was commissioned by the Facility to develop an injury metrics framework for deriving best estimates of the burden of road injuries, and benchmarking these against other diseases.

The Facility also facilitates technical exchanges between developing country road agencies and leading global institutions. In particular, the Facility’s partnership with the International Road Traffic and Accident Database (IRTAD) of the International Transport Forum at the OECD enables developing countries to work with developed countries to improve their data management systems.
Promoting global advocacy

Building coalitions to elevate road safety as a policy priority

The Global Road Safety Facility recognizes the value of building broad-based coalitions in advancing research, leveraging additional resources, and elevating road safety as a national policy priority. Civil society organizations have an important advocacy and operational role to play in supporting the objectives of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

The Facility has supported the global road safety advocacy movement from the onset, endorsing regional and country-based workshops and working with CSOs that promote the road safety agenda. More recently, the Facility has pledged support to the newly established Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety, a platform founded to harness the energy of civil society and more effectively advocate for traffic safety victims.

Film actress Michelle Yeoh and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg joined then-World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick on April 19, 2011 to boost a landmark road safety initiative by seven multilateral development banks. Together, these banks will account for US$200 billion worth of road building investments during the Decade of Action.
China Engagement Strategy

With support from the Facility, the World Bank and the Government of China have prepared a new road safety engagement strategy with an emphasis on accelerated transfer of road safety knowledge, scaled-up investments and lead agency coordination functions. A major outcome of the review was the launch of China’s first wave of Safe System investment projects in selected cities.

Safe System at Work in Argentina

The World Bank’s Argentina Road Safety Project is an innovative multisectoral application of the Safe System approach. Its primary emphasis is on reinforcing the role of a newly-created lead agency, in delivering institutional coordination and developing partnership capacity. The project has also demonstrated collaborative engagement by the Bank’s transport and health sector teams with their country public administration counterparts.
Road Safety Corridors in Africa

TOTAL and the World Bank have joined forces to launch an initiative for road safety along some of Africa’s main transport development axes. Leveraging on their specific knowledge, resources and experience, partners of the African Road Safety Corridor Initiative are working to reduce traffic injury through activities ranging from awareness campaigns to safe fleet management practices.

Three-Star Roads in Karnataka

Following a survey of selected portions of Karnataka’s road network funded by the Facility, the Government of Karnataka has endorsed “3 star or better” road protection scores on safety corridors and concession roads. Over 20 years, it is estimated that this measure together with the associated infrastructure improvements could prevent approximately 30,000 deaths and serious injuries.
Applying for facility grants

Since 2006, the Facility has grown into a globally recognized institution for funding road safety activities related to lead agency development, road infrastructure improvement, monitoring and evaluation, and technical assistance in low- and middle-income countries.

Facility funding has been channelled to over 20 countries and resulted in over US$500 million committed to road safety investments. The Facility Implementation Unit (FIU) is responsible for the overall oversight of a portfolio comprising World Bank-executed and recipient-executed activities. Bank-executed activities are guided primarily by the ability to leverage and influence road safety policy and the design of road projects. Requests for support to recipient-executed activities are received on a rolling basis and evaluated against the Facility’s strategic objectives and their ability to affect road safety outcomes at country or regional level.

To receive Facility support, activities should generally meet the following criteria:

- Proposed global and regional activities must be aligned and harmonized with other related Facility initiatives;
- Proposed country activities commonly have official, written government endorsement prior to Facility consideration, and in many cases the undertaking of a Facility funded country safety management capacity review is a mandatory first step for countries seeking Facility assistance;
- Proposed global, regional and country activities must support the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

The Facility Implementation Unit currently accepts proposals for review on a rolling basis and will normally respond to initial funding inquiries within 15 business days. For more details, please visit our website at worldbank.org/grsf.
"It is vital during the UN Decade of Action that the multilateral development banks mainstream road safety into their policies for sustainable transport. The FIA Foundation is pleased to support the key role played by the Global Road Safety Facility in improving the road safety outcomes of the MDBs road transport investments."

David Ward
Director General
FIA Foundation