

Reducing Road Deaths an Urgent Development Goal

Dipan Bose

In 2010, more than 100 countries co-sponsored a landmark resolution by the UN General Assembly—a Decade of Action for Road Safety—to stabilize and then reduce forecasted global traffic fatalities by 2020.¹ The goal is ambitious. From 1980 to 2010, road fatalities as a share of population rose about 13% worldwide, but they rose by more than 75% in developing East Asia (including China) and by 66% in South Asia (including India). Awareness and advocacy have strengthened over the past five years, but these data suggest that developing countries, especially in the middle-income group, will fail to attain the 2020 goal set by the Decade of Action. Now midway to the end of that decade, countries are set to meet in Brazil in November to discuss ways to accelerate progress toward the 2020 goal.



5% of GDP
The annual cost of road traffic crashes in developing countries, or more than \$1 trillion

Road traffic crashes are a key obstacle to economic development and a burden on public health:

- Road traffic injuries are estimated to cost developing countries 5% of GDP, or more than \$1 trillion per year.
- Worldwide, they now kill about 1.3 million people every year and severely injure another 50 million or more.
- 92% of the annual deaths are in developing countries and half are among motorcyclists, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- For individuals aged 15–29, they are the world's leading cause of death among males and the fourth leading cause among females.

In its “Global Plan” for the Decade of Action, the World Health Organization (WHO) observed a “growing awareness” of the road safety crisis and that “activity at the international level has gained new momentum.” But “even so, current initiatives and levels of investment are inadequate to halt or reverse the predicted rise in road traffic deaths. ... political will and funding levels are far from commensurate with the scale of the problem. ... the crisis requires ambitious vision, increased investment, and better collaboration.”

¹ The resolution gave neither a forecast nor a numerical target for reduction. In its 2013 *Global Status Report on Road Safety*, the World Health Organization projected annual worldwide traffic deaths as rising from 1.3 million in 2011 to 1.9 million by 2020. It noted that steadily reducing the death rate over the decade to 0.9 million—a much more ambitious goal than stabilizing and then reducing—would save 5 million lives by 2020.

More Progress Needed

The 2013 WHO analysis, *Global Status Report on Road Safety*, provided 2010 data to serve as the baseline for measuring progress during the Decade of Action. As it noted, “Strategies exist that are proven to reduce road traffic injuries.” But it emphasized a widespread lack of progress in implementation, particularly in legislation, law enforcement, and the protection of motorcyclists, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Getting Back on Track

Over their 30–40 year history of road safety gains, the best-performing countries increased their institutional—that is, agency—competency and ownership of safety management functions.

The overwhelming challenge in the remainder of the decade is to help build the capacity of national agencies, especially in rapidly motorizing countries, to implement and manage strategic interventions, including in policing, research and data, and safer designs for roads and vehicles.

Road Safety Policing

Enforcement has been one of the least advanced areas of WHO’s Global Plan. Better financing to supply training and equipment can produce faster results, and an association or series of partnerships, set up by and for police, could help fill the gap.

Lead Agency Capacity and Data Management

A competent lead agency for national road safety is needed to establish a country’s good road safety practices. The World Bank’s system for appraising such agencies helps countries strengthen the capacity of their lead agencies to devise and execute action plans, including better management of data on road accidents.

Safer Infrastructure and Safer Vehicles

Existing roads must be modified to improve overall safety and better protect the most vulnerable users—pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. Likewise, new roads should not be built without such safety features.

The Global New Car Assessment Program (Global NCAP) has raised consumer awareness of vital car safety features, which have begun to appear more frequently in vehicles sold in developing countries. In the remainder of the decade, countries should increase their own capacity to educate consumers, assess vehicle safety needs, and regulate the condition of vehicles on the road.

In the second half of the Decade of Action, the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, will continue to have an important role in supporting progress; but stronger national action, especially in implementation, is more urgent than ever.

World Bank Action

The World Bank has ramped up its funding and focused on supporting stronger road safety management, including enforcement capacity, vehicle safety, data management systems, and engagement with civil societies and the private sector:

- All road projects are to be screened to ensure road safety compliance.
- Road safety lending within World Bank projects has grown from \$55 million in 2006 to \$411 million in 2014.
- More than 70% of the road projects with road safety components have been designed with a multisectoral, safe-systems approach.
- The World Bank supports development of national and regional data observatories, to improve the collection of road injury data.

► For more information on this topic:

WHO, *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013*
http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2013/en

World Bank and IHME, *Transport for Health*
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/01/19308007/transport-health-global-burden-disease-motorized-road-transport>

WHO, *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020*
http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/en/

Global Road Safety Facility
www.worldbank.org/grsf

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