



Global plan for the decade of action for road safety: Opportunities and challenges for developing countries

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Globally, nearly 1.3 million people die every year as a result of road traffic crashes (RTCs). Additionally, 20 to 50 million more people sustain RTCs-related non-fatal injuries, which are an important cause of disability worldwide. Road traffic injuries (RTIs) are among the three leading causes of death for people between 5 and 44 years of age. Unless immediate and effective action is taken, RTIs are predicted to become the fifth leading cause of death in the world by 2020, resulting in an estimated 2.4 million deaths each year. For young adults and economically productive age-group (15 to 44 years), RTIs account for the 59% of global road traffic associated deaths. The economic costs of RTCs have been estimated between 1% to 3% of the respective GNP of the world countries, reaching a total over \$500 billion.^{1,2}

Given the backdrop of these colossal losses in terms of both human and economic resources, the UN General Assembly pronounced 2011–2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety, with a global goal of stabilizing and then reducing the predicted level of global road fatalities by increasing activities conducted at national, regional and global levels. Activities undertaken as part of this Decade of Action for Road Safety are expected to have an impact on improving systems of sustainable development.^{1,3} The envisaged global plan would provide a timeframe for action to encourage political and resource commitments both globally and nationally. Low and middle-income countries can use it to facilitate and accelerate the adoption of cost-effective road safety programmes, while high-income countries can use it to make progress in improving their road safety performance as well as to share their experiences and knowledge with others.⁴⁻⁵

Strategic partners in global road safety recommend accelerated investment in road safety in low and middle-income

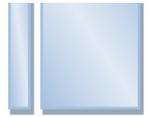
countries. Sustained political commitment and efforts made by road traffic departments in many developed countries have been able to reduce the RTA-related injuries and deaths. Lessons learnt from the experience of such countries can serve as guidelines for developing countries to improve national RTAs control and prevention programs. National road safety efforts in such countries should be centered around development of a surveillance network to promote the collection of data on RTAs-related injuries and associated factors to measure the accurate magnitude of the problem, and the impact of interventions. Such data are essential inputs for evidence-based policymaking, setting up logical and realistic goals and furnish basis for rationale allocation of available funds.⁶

Major risk factors and effective countermeasures largely are known. A wide range of factors including young age, male gender, poor education, substance use, non-compliance with traffic safety rules, speed limits, risk taking behaviours, non-use of seat-belts, hand-held mobile phone use among others have been identified as associated with RTAs. Additional steps including the use of mass media for public education about road safety rules and mandatory measures such as strict enforcement of legislation and regulations regarding the use of seat-belts, speed limits, installation of speed cameras, child

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restraint, as well as designing safer roads are needed to accomplish the goals of the decade.^{3,7} Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the outcome of implemented measures is equally important to counter the RTA burden on societal well-being and overall economy. In summary, implementation of evidence-based control and preventive measures sustained by political commitment can save myriad lives and simultaneously reduce the burden on the health care systems of the developing countries.

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