

Kenya lacks adequate laws to safeguard vulnerable road users, says WHO report

The report shows that Kenya has no law to protect pedestrians, who include children.

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Schoolchildren waiting to cross a busy road. A report by the World Health Organisation on road safety shows that Kenya lacks laws to protect pedestrians, including children. FILE PHOTO | NATION MEDIA GROUP

In Summary

- The global road safety report states that pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists together make up 49 per cent of all global road traffic deaths.
- Enforcement of laws targeting motorcyclists has been rated as low compared with the execution of those targeting motorists.
- Currently, Kenya has no laws that safeguard children, who are listed as vulnerable road users especially when going to and from school.
- Some of the laws proposed in the traffic Bill will ensure school vans are fitted with safety belts and are roadworthy.

Kenya has "weak" laws for safeguarding vulnerable road users, who include pedestrians and motorcyclists, a report by the World Health Organisation has stated.

The 2015 *Global Status Report on Road Safety* shows that Kenya has no law to protect pedestrians, who include children.

The study launched last week indicates that the country has laws targeting motorcyclists, but the enforcement has been rated as low compared with the execution of those targeting motorists.

The country profile for Kenya shows enforcement of laws on speed limits, drink-driving and wearing of safety belts is high, with ratings of six, five and six respectively.

However, the report shows that though Kenya has laws on wearing helmets to protect motorcyclists and their passengers, the enforcement rate is at four.

NO LAWS TARGETING CHILDREN

The road safety report states Kenya has no laws to safeguard children.

This is especially in regard to the use of safety belts and limiting children from sitting in the front seats of motor vehicles.

Ms Stephanie Aketch, the road safety project manager at Handicap International, said safety belts are crucial in protecting children in case of road crashes.

She said currently, Kenya has no laws that safeguard children, who are listed as vulnerable road users especially when going to and from school.

“However there is the Traffic Amendment Bill (2014) that is pending in the National Assembly, which if passed, would ensure the protection of children on the roads,” she said.

Some of the laws proposed in the traffic Bill will ensure school vans are fitted with safety belts and are roadworthy.

“Currently, the country has no law on safety belts for children.

“If passed, the Bill would ensure that children being ferried in any form of school transportation are buckled up, and as a country we can begin dealing with the excess loading of child passengers in school buses,” she said.

SPEED LIMIT NEAR SCHOOLS

A law on a speed limit of 30kph near schools has also been proposed in the Bill.

The Bill also proposes introducing speed "calming" measures such as speed bumps and rumble strips in places where speed limits cannot be imposed, including sections of highways near schools.

The global road safety report states that pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists together make up 49 per cent of all global road traffic deaths.

A report by Kenya's National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) shows 1,024 pedestrians, 326 motorcyclists, 58 cyclists and 161 passengers were killed in road crashes between January and October 15 this year.

The WHO report recommends a multifaceted approach to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which include a target of reducing road traffic deaths by 50 per cent by 2020.

This involves improving public transport as well as making walking and cycling safer by focusing on how vehicles and people share the road.