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# Putting The Brakes On Global Road Crash Deaths: One Foundation's Efforts

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As the United Nations (UN) meets this week to formally adopt the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it will set the stage for dealing with a worldwide scourge—road crashes and the growing rates of traffic deaths and injuries. Road crashes kill more than 1.2 million people a year worldwide and injure more than 50 million, with deaths disproportionately taking place in low- to middle-income countries.

It's about time; this public health crisis goes largely unrecognized. If no action is taken, it will become the seventh leading cause of death globally by 2030.

The UN's plan for dealing with this

epidemic is part of [SDG Goal 3](#) and [SDG Goal 11](#), which ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages, and also promote safe, affordable, and sustainable transport systems for all.

What's surprising about this common urban challenge is that it is widely ignored and not even considered a health problem. The UN is aiming to cut in half the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020.

When you think of addressing the leading causes of death, you don't often equate road safety with public health. However, the numbers are simply shocking enough that the UN—working with several groups including the [World Health Organization](#)—has been developing several high-level campaigns to take on this crisis, including [Global Road Safety Week](#) and the [Decade of Action for Road Safety](#), both adopted in 2010.

Local governments and our partner [groups](#) are making a measurable difference toward cutting traffic deaths. Real benefits are happening—dramatically decreased fatalities and injuries—that result from improved road infrastructure, promotion of sustainable transportation, and stronger enforcement of better laws.

In 2007, [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) launched an evidence-based intervention initiative, the [Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety](#), with pilot programs in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Mexico. The pilots for reducing road traffic fatalities and injuries in these countries have saved thousands of lives. One early success in Vietnam involved multiple stakeholders working on road safety. The [Atlantic Philanthropies](#) supported work on helmet use, as did UNICEF, the government of Australia, and others. Vietnam passed a national helmet law in 2007, which contributed to a remarkable increase in the percentage of helmet wearing among motorcyclists—jumping to 95 percent from 40 percent—a result of successfully urging that the government impose a national helmet-wearing mandate.

Three years later, in 2010, Bloomberg Philanthropies followed up with a five-year, \$125 million, total, investment in its Initiative for Global Road Safety in the ten countries that accounted for half of all global traffic fatalities: Brazil, Cambodia, China, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and Vietnam. Each country received technical assistance and infrastructure

support for improving pedestrian safety, increasing awareness through media campaigns, and increasing police reinforcement, as well as other solutions. The work we are doing with our six international partners, alongside local governments, continues to implement proven interventions, including instituting mandatory seat-belt and helmet laws and stricter penalties for drinking and driving and for speeding; recommending road infrastructure improvements; and promoting sustainable urban transport.

To date, results of these programs have been extraordinarily exciting. In 2011, only 34 percent of motorcyclists in Ha Nam, Vietnam, used helmets; today, 76 percent do. In Thika, Kenya, in 2010, 68 percent of drivers were driving over the speed limit; by 2014, that number plummeted to 2 percent. In Afyon, Turkey, seat-belt wearing increased substantially, from only 4 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2014. In total, interventions funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies have saved an estimated 125,000 lives.

The Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety is an extremely promising start to improving policy and practice, but there's much more to do. For our Initiative for Global Road Safety (2015-2019), we made another \$125 million reinvestment in strengthening road safety laws and regulations in five countries—China, India, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Thailand—in collaboration with eight expert road safety partners, including the World Health Organization; World Resources Institute's EMBARQ program; Global Road Safety Partnership; Global Road Safety Facility; [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#); the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease](#); National Association of City Transportation Officials; and the Global New Car Assessment Programme.

Given the opportunity to have broad impact at the city level, where mayors can move quickly to adopt and enforce best practices, we have added a component that focuses on implementing proven interventions in ten major cities, including Accra, Ghana; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Bandung, Indonesia; Bangkok, Thailand; Bogota, Colombia; Fortaleza, Brazil; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Mumbai, India; Sao Paulo, Brazil; and Shanghai, China. The cities were chosen competitively, and the mayors of each city have committed to work with our partners to

address the leading road safety issues in each of their cities.

And, because unsafe vehicles contribute to deaths, we are funding the [Global New Car Assessment Programme](#) to test vehicles in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and India, and advocating for strengthened vehicle standards in those regions—where there are minimal vehicle safety standards, such as regulations for air bags or seat belts—to protect consumers.

The UN has recognized the critical and dangerous situation that exists on roads all over the world by addressing it as part of the SDGs. It's up to those of us already working on this problem to build on the lessons learned and our successes, collaborate with our partners, and identify and encourage new stakeholders to participate.

Without action, road traffic crashes will become the seventh leading cause of death by 2030. But by working together, we can cut the number of traffic-related deaths in half. As these programs prove, this is a goal we can achieve.

TAGS: CONSUMERS, GLOBAL HEALTH, HEALTH PHILANTHROPY, NON-NATIONS

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Felicitaciones por el esfuerzo en Seguridad Vial Global.

October 1st, 2015 at 5:27 pm

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