



HUMAN RIGHTS & ROAD SAFETY

A GRSP Positioning Paper

This paper is one of a suite of Positioning Papers from the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP). These papers are designed to create an understanding of the scale of road traffic deaths and injuries and their linkages to other humanitarian and development issues. The Positioning Papers seek to highlight that road safety is a multidimensional issue that requires an urgent and sustained contribution across many sectors.

There are a number of evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing road traffic deaths and injuries, including designing safer roads, strengthening vehicle safety standards, improving road safety management, implementing effective post-crash care, and ensuring the passage, implementation and enforcement of comprehensive laws to protect road users. GRSP Positioning Papers primarily focus on the role of road users and the need for strong laws that help protect them.

OVERVIEW

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes a right to life, yet millions of lives are lost every year to preventable injuries suffered from road crashes.¹ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights cites poverty, unsafe environments and the denial of the right to health as just a few of the interlinked root causes of mortality and morbidity.² Furthermore, these issues are highlighted by the inclusion of targets related to reductions in road traffic deaths and injuries under Goal 3 and Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³

According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.2 million people die each year, and up to 50 million are injured, on the world's roads. Ninety percent of these deaths and injuries occur in low- and middle- income countries.⁴ Given that the majority of road crash deaths and serious injuries are preventable, road safety and access to safe and sustainable transport systems must be considered a global human rights issue.

ROAD SAFETY IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obligates signatories to protect and fulfill human rights.⁵ The growing global epidemic of road traffic deaths and injuries can only be addressed with a combination of government commitment, civil society engagement and private sector participation.⁶
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development strives to “combat inequalities within and among countries.”⁷ The divide between rich and poor countries is evident in relation to road safety because low- and middle-income countries overwhelmingly bear the burden of global road trauma. Whilst low- and middle-income countries account for only 54% of the motorized vehicles, 90% of the world's road deaths occur in these countries.⁸
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes a person's right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and of their family.⁹



ESSENTIAL FACTS

- Globally, an estimated 3% of GDP is lost to road traffic deaths and injuries. However, low- and middle-income countries can be more acutely affected losing up to 5 % of GDP as a result of road traffic crashes.¹⁰ The significant economic impact on GDP directly impacts individuals and families. The GDP losses also restrict the level of revenue collected by governments for investment in priority social and economic infrastructure.¹¹
- Globally, road traffic crashes are the main cause of death among those aged 15 – 29 years, and a major cause of death among all young people.¹²
- Nearly 85% of the world's countries lack adequate laws to counter the growing rates of road traffic deaths and injuries.¹³

CASE STUDY

Advocating for road safety in South Africa

THE DEATH OF ZINDZI MANDELA'S GRANDDAUGHTER IN A ROAD CRASH IN 2010 OPENED HER EYES TO THE NEGLECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE WORLD'S ROADS. Her granddaughter—Zenani—had just turned 13 two days before she was killed in a crash caused by a driver who had been drinking. The launch of the Zenani Mandela Scholarship gave Zindzi the opportunity to commit herself to advocating for basic human rights on every road in the world, so that other families did not have to suffer the tragedy that had befallen her own family.²²

South Africa has one of the world's worst road safety records. Each year, almost 14,000 people are killed as a result of road traffic crashes in South Africa, with thousands more injured. While national seat-belt laws are in place, enforcement of the law is extremely poor – only 33% of drivers have been recorded as wearing seatbelts. Additionally, even with drink-driving laws in effect, 58% of road traffic deaths are still reported to involve alcohol.²³

The Zenani Mandela Scholarship for Road Safety has been set up to inspire the young leaders of South Africa to join the road safety global movement as represented by the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020)²⁴, which aims to save millions of lives over 10 years. The purpose of the Scholarship is to offer young South Africans the opportunity to learn with and from other talented professionals from around the world, with the common aim of improving road safety in their communities.



SOLUTIONS

In response to the road traffic fatality crisis, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020), which serves as the primary vehicle by which road safety is being addressed at the global level. The Global Plan of the Decade of Action is organized around five pillars, which detail a series of recognized interventions: improving road safety management; designing safer roads; strengthening vehicle safety standards; ensuring the passage, implementation and enforcement of comprehensive laws to protect road users; and implementing effective post-crash care.¹⁴

Reducing the burden of road traffic deaths and injuries around the world requires multiple players working together. While each element of the road system (vehicle, road, and person) contributes to any given road crash, road user related factors make a significant contribution and, therefore, require ongoing attention.¹⁵ The Global Road Safety Partnership's Advocacy and Grants Programme focuses primarily on advocating for stronger road safety policies and improving the effectiveness of road safety law enforcement. According to international best practices, adopting and enforcing strong road safety laws on five key risk factors can significantly reduce road traffic death and injury.¹⁶

- **Speed management:** Setting and enforcing appropriate speed limits is one of the most effective measures in reducing road traffic injuries, influencing

both the risk of being in a road traffic crash, as well as the severity of the injuries that result from crashes. For example, for an adult pedestrian, the risk of dying if struck by a car travelling at less than 50km/h is below 20%. Those odds rise substantially as vehicle speed increases. The same adult pedestrian has a 60% risk of dying if hit at 80 km/h.¹⁷

- **Seatbelts:** The simple act of buckling a seatbelt is one of the most effective ways to save lives. Correctly wearing a seat-belt reduces the risk of a fatal injury by up to 50% for front seat occupants and by up to 75% for rear seat occupants.
- **Child restraints:** Children wearing an appropriate restraint for their size and weight are significantly less likely to be killed or injured than unrestrained children. Rear-facing restraints for children aged 0 to 23 months have been shown to reduce the risk of death or injury by over 90% and forward facing child restraints by almost 80% compared to being unrestrained.¹⁸
- **Motorcycle helmets:** Wearing a motorcycle helmet is a proven way to decrease death and serious injury. Helmet usage decreases the risk of injuries by 69%, and deaths by 42%.¹⁹
- **Drinking and driving:** Driving while impaired by alcohol increases both the risk of a crash and the likelihood that a death or a serious injury will occur. Strictly enforcing an effective drink-driving law can reduce the number of road deaths by 20%.²⁰

ENDNOTES

- 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN General Assembly, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> accessed 30 May 2016)
- 2 Technical Guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce and eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 years of age, United Nations General Assembly, 2014 (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/TechnicalGuidance/TechnicalGuidancereport.pdf> accessed 25 April 2016)
- 3 Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/> accessed 17 November 2016).
- 4 Global Status Report of Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 26 April 2016)
- 5 General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx> accessed 25 April 2016)
- 6 Report on improving global road safety, United Nations General Assembly, 2007 (<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/roadsafe/docs/A-RES-62-257e.pdf> accessed 25 April 2016)
- 7 Transforming our world: the 2013 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations General Assembly, (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/> accessed 25 April 2016)
- 8 Global Status Report of Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 26 April 2016)
- 9 General Assembly resolution 217 A, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> accessed 25 April 2016)
- 10 Global Status Report of Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 26 April 2016)
- 11 Watkins, K., The missing Link: Road traffic injuries and the Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.fiafoundation.org/media/46107/the-missing-link-lr.pdf> accessed 7 June 2016)
- 12 Global health estimates. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014 (http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/ accessed 30 May 2016)
- 13 Helping to save lives through proven interventions that reduce road traffic fatalities, Bloomberg Philanthropies (www.bloomberg.org/program/public-health/road-safety/ accessed 26 April 2016)
- 14 Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/en/ accessed 9 June 2016)
- 15 Goodwin, A., Thomas, L., Kirley, B., Hall, W., O'Brien, N., & Hill, K., Countermeasures that work: A highway safety countermeasure guide for State highway safety offices, Eighth edition. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2015
- 16 Global Status Report on Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 25 April 2016)
- 17 Global Status Report on Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 25 April 2016)
- 18 Elvik R et al. The handbook of road safety measures, 2nd ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited; 2009.
- 19 Liu B et al. Helmets for preventing injury in motorcycle riders. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. 2009.
- 20 Drink- Driving: The Facts, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 30 May 2016)
- 21 Global Road Safety Partnership (<http://www.grsproadsafety.org/about-us/our-purpose> accessed 16 January 2017).
- 22 FIA Foundation. "Zenani Mandela Scholarship launched to support UN Decade of Action for Road Safety." (<https://www.fiafoundation.org/blog/2011/april/zenani-mandela-scholarship-launched-to-support-un-decade-of-action-for-road-safety?year=2011&month=4> accessed 21 January 2017)

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Global Road Safety Partnership

The Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) is a hosted programme of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and is a voluntary association of governments, businesses and civil society organisations. GRSP works to reduce deaths and serious injuries as a result of road crashes in low- and middle-income countries in a number of ways. One important way to address this humanitarian crisis is to ensure that strong, evidence-based laws are in place and effectively implemented and enforced in order to protect road users.

GRSP is looking to partner with government and civil society organizations committed to reducing this unacceptable rate of road injuries and fatalities by advocating for stronger road safety policies. For more information on our work – and the Road Safety Grants Programme – please visit our website at www.grsproadsafety.org/advocacy.

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- 23 Global Status Report on Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 26 April 2016)
- 24 United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/en/ accessed 17 November 2016)
- 25 Global Status Report on Road Safety, World Health Organization, 2015 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 26 April 2016)