



CHILDREN'S 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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 states that every child be afforded protection and care as necessary for his or her well-being. It further recognizes that “every child has the inherent right to life” and that “parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety”.¹ One important way to do this is to address the global epidemic of children killed on the world's roads.

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.² Road traffic injuries and deaths have a significant impact on individuals under the age of 18 who account for more than 186,000 road traffic deaths annually.³

ROAD SAFETY IS A CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ISSUE

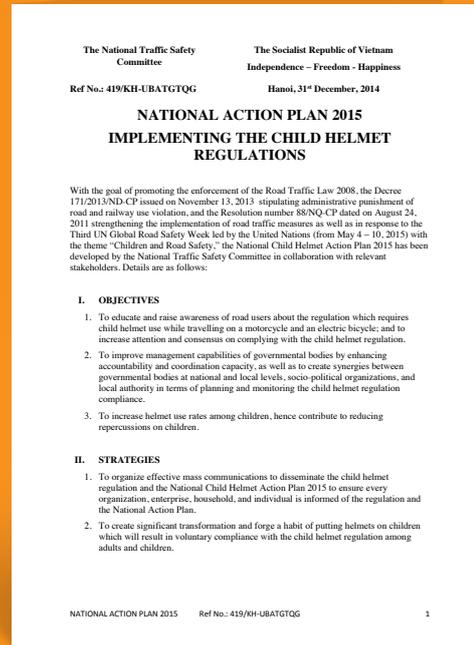
- The UN CRC requires that “parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life” and “shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.”⁴ As the FIA Foundation has highlighted, “the health burden to children caused by motorised traffic constitutes a major obstacle to child development and an unacceptable and preventable human tragedy.”⁵
- Providing access to seatbelts, child restraints, good quality helmets, and a safe walking route to school are some ways to improve the road trauma burden experienced by the world's children.
- Globally, children account for more than 186,000 road traffic deaths annually.⁶ In addition to every child that dies in a road crash, another four are permanently disabled and ten more are seriously injured.⁷ This has a direct impact on children's lives, including their ability to attend school. Road traffic injuries result in more than one million children each year having their education abruptly ended or severely disrupted, which restricts their right to education enshrined in Article 28 of the UN CRC.⁸
- One reason that children are more severely impacted by road traffic crashes is their limited physical, cognitive and social development, which makes them more vulnerable than adults to serious injury or death as a result of road crashes. Due to their small stature, it can be difficult for children to see surrounding traffic and for drivers and others to see them. In addition, if they are involved in a road traffic crash, their relatively soft heads make them more vulnerable to serious head injury than adults.⁹
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has identified the importance of addressing child road safety through a formal commitment to integrate child road traffic injury prevention into its mainstream strategic approach. The commitment includes working closely with governments and key stakeholders for sustained policy change and the development of child road traffic injury strategies.¹⁰





ESSENTIAL FACTS

- Road traffic injuries are
 - the 4th leading cause of death for children aged 5-9 years
 - the 3rd leading cause of death for children aged 10-14 years
 - the 1st cause of death for children aged 15-17 years ¹¹
- Globally, more than 220 children aged between 5-14 years lose their lives on the roads every day. In comparison, each day malnutrition accounts for approximately 140 lives lost and malaria for approximately 80 lives lost.¹²
- The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that from 1989, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, to 2015, more than 5.5 million individuals under the age of 19 have been killed on the world's roads.¹³
- By 2030, road deaths and injuries will be the main cause of healthy life years lost for children 5 - 14 years.¹⁴



CASE STUDY

Promoting the National Child Helmet Action Plan in Vietnam

MORE THAN 33 MILLION MOTORCYCLES ARE IN USE IN VIETNAM.²⁴ Despite a mandatory helmet law in place, only one in three child passengers wear helmets in major cities, and significantly fewer in rural areas.

Through a grant from the GRSP Road Safety Grants Programme, the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIPF) supported the government of Vietnam to develop and launch a National Child Helmet Action Plan in 2015. The plan aims to create a transformational shift in public attitudes towards child helmet use, significantly increasing compliance with child helmet regulation and consequently, aiming to save thousands of lives each year.

The plan consists of a combination of public awareness raising and communication about the safety benefits of child helmet use, combined with increased police enforcement. The AIP Foundation provided technical support to the Government in the development of the Action Plan, and in building a coalition of National and International NGO's to support the governments' National Child Helmet Action Plan.

As a result, the plan is now being implemented across the country, making child helmet use a priority for policy makers, the media and most importantly, the public. The Vietnamese National Traffic Safety Committee has officially approved the plan and the AIP Foundation is now working with the traffic police and other enforcement bodies, as well as conducting substantial media and public awareness campaigns, to ensure consistent and strong implementation of the plan.



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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

- **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.¹⁸

- **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.¹⁹
- **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.²⁰
- **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%.²¹
- **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%.²²

ENDNOTES

- 1 General Assembly resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 [<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx/> accessed 25 April 2016]
- 2 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]
- 3 World Health Organization, Global Health Estimates, 2014 [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/ accessed 31 May 2016]
- 4 General Assembly resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 [<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx/> accessed 25 April 2016]
- 5 FIA Foundation [<http://www.childhealthinitiative.org/>, accessed 16 January 2017]
- 6 World Health Organization, Global Health Estimates, 2014 [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/ accessed 31 May 2016]
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- 8 General Assembly resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 [<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx/> accessed 25 April 2016]
- 9 World report on child injury prevention, World Health Organization, 2008 [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563574_eng.pdf accessed 25 April 2016]
- 10 Safe for Every Child: UNICEF's agenda on road traffic injury, 2015 [http://www.who.int/roadsafety/events/2015/Appendix_3.pdf accessed 11 May 2016]
- 11 World Health Organization, Global Health Estimates, 2014 [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/ accessed 31 May 2016]
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- 13 Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Database. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2014. [<http://www.healthdata.org/> accessed 7 June 2016]
- 14 MDB Road Safety Initiative: Development Priority, Global Road Safety Facility [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTOPGLOASAF/Resources/WB_GRSF_MDB_web.pdf accessed 25 April 2016]
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- 16 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
- 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 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]
- 19 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]
- 20 Elvik R et al. The handbook of road safety measures, 2nd ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited; 2009.
- 21 Liu B et al. Helmets for preventing injury in motorcycle riders. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. 2009.
- 22 Drink – Driving: The Facts, World Health Organization, 2015 [http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/en/ accessed 30 May 2016]
- 23 Global Road Safety Partnership [<http://www.grsproadsafety.org/about-us/our-purpose> accessed 16 January 2017].
- 24 Safe to learn: Safe Journeys to School are a Child's Right, UNICEF & FIA Foundation, 2015 [<https://www.fiafoundation.org/connect/publications/safe-to-learn> accessed 9 February 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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