

Road safety is a growing development and public health issue. Globally, road crashes are in rank to become one of the five first causes of death, and non-fatal injuries heavily impact on disability. Road crashes create a tremendous burden on society - on its economy and on the public health sector - but also on the victims and their families at various levels, the poor and the vulnerable being disproportionately affected. Although road crashes and injuries are preventable through appropriate actions, including post crashes response, yet in low and middle income countries statistics suggest a dramatic increase in the coming years.

Working in a safe system approach implies working on three interactive elements - safer road users, safer roads environments and safer vehicles - in order to accommodate human error and take into account the vulnerability of human body. This approach helps identifying a shared responsibility of road system and vehicles designers, users and providers towards safer roads. Generating a safe system also generate a safer mobility for all users, including persons with disabilities.

THE CHALLENGES IN ROAD SAFETY

Road crashes are wrongly considered as the price to pay for development and traffic related death and injuries considered an un avoidable collateral damage of road use:

- Road crashes are increasingly responsible for premature deaths, disability and psychological distress (post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, etc.) while they are preventable. In Europe, a decrease of 40% has been observed over the period 2000 to 2012 while for Africa and the South East Asia, road crashes dramatically increased by the same percentage over the same period.⁽¹⁾ This clearly shows effective measures exist, are known and can make a significant difference when supported by political will and dedicated resources;
- Vulnerable users (pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists), whom also tend to be amongst the poorest are the most at risk, totaling more than half of the casualties. Operating in an unsafe system augments the risk of death and injuries and overall negatively impacts people's mobility. Safe roads and safe transportation systems participate to creating an accessible urban environment where people can move safely. For all users and more particularly persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (the elderly, pregnant women, children, etc.) a safe mobility is crucial in reaching universal accessibility of services.

THE VALUE OF SAFER ROADS

Working on a safe transportation system benefits all users and the society as a whole.



Making transportation and road infrastructure safe and accessible is essential for persons with disabilities to access a safe mobility. © Kristof Vadino/Handicap International.

The direct costs of road crashes and injuries, when speaking of loss of productivity, exceed the amount received by low and middle income countries for development assistance, thus undermining poverty reduction efforts. The health sector is also impacted. Road crash victims accounting for almost half of the hospital bed occupancy in trauma wards in some low and middle income countries where often beds are scarce and resources limited.⁽²⁾

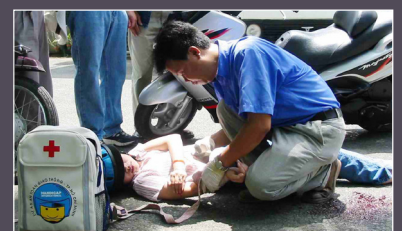
At the individual level, statistics shows that more than 50% of road crashes casualties are in the bread winners' fringe - from 15 to 44 - and that many non-fatal injuries will lead to short or long term impairments. Thus, in addition to the psychological impact, the family also has to face a loss or diminution of income, with additional expenses made to cover for death or for treatment, including rehabilitation services.

All users have mobility and access needs but those can vary from one group to another. For persons with disabilities and persons with limited mobility, unsafe mobility and barriers in transportation create additional barriers to accessing education, health services and many others, avoidable with appropriate road safety interventions.

KEY FACTS⁽³⁾

- Road crashes kill more than 1.25 million people and injure as many as 50 million a year.
- More than 90% of casualties occur in low and middle income countries.
- 50% of the deaths are among vulnerable users.
- The poorest and the most vulnerable are also the most vulnerable users and are disproportionately affected and exposed to risks and road crashes.
- The global financial cost is estimated around USD 1.850 billion per year.⁽⁴⁾

Quality of emergency care is decisive to influence the possible development of short or long term impairments. For instance for a victim with spinal cord injury, good manipulation and good transport conditions are key to preserve the spine and ultimately the mobility. Also, if an amputation is needed, emergency personnel should proceed making sure the victims can later be equipped with a prosthesis. Knowing also that a large proportion of people die before reaching the hospital while death was preventable, Handicap International developed actions to improve the capacity of local actors (police, Red Cross volunteers, community volunteers, ambulances crews) in providing first aid response to road crash victims, referring them to adequate health structures, including for rehabilitation, and developing relevant emergency systems at community level. © Handicap International Vietnam.





HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS ON ROAD SAFETY

Handicap International intervenes in a dozen of countries where road safety continues being a major health and development issue. Vulnerable users, including persons with disabilities, considering their greater exposure to crashes and injuries as well as their needs for a safe mobility, are at the center of our interventions. We work closely with national stakeholders, amongst which associations of victims, including for strengthening their capacity, as well as local communities to raise awareness. Our interventions are in line with the UN Decade of Action and focus on strengthening legislation, policies and standards, educating the population and ensuring behavior changes around major risk factors. Handicap International, along with local partners, also accompanies governments to build safer roads including with data collection through our Road Crash and Victim Information System (RCVIS) or the elaboration of legislations and enforcement mechanisms. We also help strengthening the post-crash response, improving first aid and advocating for rehabilitation and psychological services to be available to victims and their families.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The Brasilia Declaration 2015 | Sustainable Development Goals #3 & #11 | UNGA Resolution 64/255 "Improving global road safety" | UN Decade of Action for Road Safety & the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 | The NGOs' Brussels Declaration - 2009 | UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Art. 20, 25, 26.

WHAT CAN ACTORS DO?

Any interventions on road safety should be in line with the United Nations' Decade of Action for Road Safety, taking the principles of the safe system approach and encouraging actions around five key pillars.

In particular, Handicap International recommends the following :

- Systematically **consult and involve victims' networks as well as persons with disabilities and their representative organizations** in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of road safety policies and encourage community based actions;
- Systematically **devote specific attention to vulnerable users** to address their needs for safe mobility and transportation;
- Systematically **include road safety as part of planning and design of transport system and road infrastructures and devote an appropriate share of funding**, including through international cooperation.

Road safety management

- Support, establish and maintain **road safety data collection systems to inform and plan road safety strategies and actions**;
- **Encourage and support research on road safety**, in particular on the linkages between road crashes and disability;
- Support and **strengthen multi-stakeholders collaboration on road safety management** including to develop and

implement national road safety plans as well as to adopt and enforce comprehensive legislation.

Safer roads and mobility

- Support and establish **safe, accessible and quality transport systems** (particularly public and non-motorized transports) and information as well as urban planning **policies that take into account needs and safety for all vulnerable road users, including persons with disabilities**;
- Support and take appropriate measure to **ensure persons with disabilities and other users with reduced mobility, on an equal basis, have access to the physical environment of roads and surrounding areas and to transportation**, both in urban and in rural areas and promote universal design.

Safer vehicles

- Support and establish **safety standards and other technical requirements, including for importation and set control mechanism** including regular technical control for all vehicles in circulation and other enforcement mechanisms.

Safer road users

- Support and **increase awareness raising campaigns and initiatives**, including age adequate road safety education, adapted to the context in close collaboration with local communities.

Post crashes response

- Support and **strengthen civil society and victims' associations**;
- Support, establish and improve **first aid intervention and emergency services, including the provision of early rehabilitation and comprehensive support to victims and their families**, including social reintegration;
- Support and strengthen **hospital care and ensure for availability of early and long term rehabilitation as well as psychological support to road crash victims**.

HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS?

Policies: Road safety, in particular vulnerable users' needs, is considered in the planning and designed of transport systems and infrastructures and sustainably funded ● The link between disability and road traffic related injuries is researched ● Road safety strategies are elaborated via multi-stakeholders collaboration with related targets and monitoring mechanisms ● Data collection systems are developed and effectively managed ● International and national safety standards, including for importations, and technical requirements are determined and controlled ● National legislation on traffic rules are elaborated and address the main risk factors ● Road safety education and awareness raising is provided ● First aid and emergency services are improved ● Rehabilitation services as well as psychological support are available.

Access: Users have access to safe, accessible and quality mobility ● Victims' network as well as persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are strengthened and participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of road safety policies.

References ⁽¹⁾ WHO, Disease and injury regional mortality estimates, 2000-2012, 2014 | ⁽²⁾ Commission for Global Road Safety, "Make Roads Safe", 2007 | ⁽³⁾ WHO, Global status report on road safety, 2015 | ⁽⁴⁾ IRAP, The Global Cost of Road Crashes, 2013.