

Policy briefing UN Open Working Group 11
Road traffic injury and the Post-2015 development agenda

The reduction of road traffic fatalities and injuries has been recognised by the Post-2015 Open Working Group. Road safety has also been included by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his recommendations to the UN General Assembly on steps to advance the Post-2015 Agenda.¹ UNGA has passed Res A/68/L.40 to consider road safety Post-2015.² As recognised in the 7th OWG Session, safe and sustainable transport is vital for health, economic development and poverty eradication. It has cross cutting benefits, building on MDG progress in promoting health, protecting the environment and enabling people to access education, employment and services.

A Post-2015 target for reducing road traffic fatalities should be situated within a Health Goal as suggested by the UNSG and cross referenced when addressing key focus areas such as Urbanisation and Infrastructure: 'By 2030 reduce road traffic injuries and fatalities globally by 50%'. The target is measurable, easy to communicate, inclusive and universal. It would contribute to wider health and sustainable development priorities.

Road traffic injury: a global public health crisis

Recent research from the Global Burden of Disease shows the extent of the health burden, particularly on young people.³ As well as being the No.1 killer of young people aged 15-29 yrs. worldwide it is also the leading killer of boys of younger age groups and has a severe health impact on women. It is a leading cause of disability causing as many as 78.2 million injuries per year according to the GBD. The burden on health systems particularly in low and middle income countries is unsustainable. This crisis is preventable but requires global support and coordination for low and middle income countries to reverse the trend of rising. Coordination between health and transport sectors is essential.

A Post-2015 target for road traffic fatalities

Process indicators and proposed targets by country income cluster have been submitted to the Open Working Group in the Partnership for Low Carbon Transport (SLoCAT) Post-2015 Results Framework. This also outlines implementation and enabling measures in line with the Global Plan for the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.⁴

The proposed target by 2030 is to halve the burden of global road traffic crashes from the 2010 baseline in the WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013.

- Fatalities target: By 2030, reducing the number of people killed on the world's roads to less than 620,000 per year from the 2010 baseline of 1.24 million per year.

¹ See for example Co-Chairs Summary for OWG 7

http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2958co-chairs%20summary%20bullet%20points_owg7%2020%20Jan.pdf; And UNSG 'A Life of Dignity for All' section 87 'Improve Health' <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/A%20Life%20of%20Dignity%20for%20All.pdf>

² <http://www.makeroadssafe.org/news/2014/Pages/UNroadsafetydebatehearscallforpost-2015action.aspx>

³ <http://www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd/publications/policy-report/transport-health-global-burden-disease-motorized-road-transport>

⁴ For a detailed outline of targets, indicators and implementation measures see

http://www.slocat.net/sites/default/files/u10/draft_sustainable_transport_results_framework_owg_7_input-jan_3_0.pdf

Fatality targets by country income cluster (the Results Framework also includes injury and economic targets by income level). Reduce road traffic fatality rates by 2030 to:

< 4 per 100,000 population in high-income countries (baseline of 8.7 in 2010)

< 7 per 100,000 population in middle-income countries (baseline of 20.1 in 2010)

< 12 per 100,000 population in low-income countries (baseline of 18.3 in 2010)

- **Serious Injuries:** By 2030, reduce the number of people seriously injured on the world's roads to less than 6,200,000 per year from the 2010 baseline of 12.4 million per year.
- **Economic Impact:** By 2030, reduce the global economic impact of road crashes to less than 1.5% of GDP per year from the current 3% of GDP per year

Solutions for road safety are well known and have been proven effective: By addressing speeding, drink driving, seatbelt and helmet wearing and improving safety of vehicles and road infrastructure, several Australasian, Western European and North American countries have reduced road death rates by >70% in the last few decades despite increased motorisation.

Road safety and sustainable development

Together with mass transit systems, safe walking and cycling networks can create a cascade of health benefits: better pedestrian safety, improved physical activity and improved urban air quality. This would also assist in achieving a proposed Post-2015 target of bringing urban air pollution within WHO limits for an additional 1.5 billion urban residents by 2030.⁵

An agenda for health, education and the eradication of poverty:

Low- and middle-income countries account for the majority (90%) of 1.24 million annual road traffic fatalities which are the No.1 cause of death for young people. The GBD 2010 Study and the WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013 confirm the divide between developed and developing countries on road injury. Road deaths rose dramatically in SE Asia (66%), Central America (33%) and West Africa (112%) during the GBD period.⁶

Road traffic injuries place an immense burden on health-care systems, diverting financial and human resources from other priorities. In many low and middle income countries road traffic injury accounts for a large number of trauma admissions, as much as 60% in some countries.⁷ Road traffic injuries weaken economic growth and the costs are borne disproportionately by the poor. The World Bank has estimated the cost of road traffic injuries at US\$100bn, a figure representing 80% of OECD aid in 2009. Research has shown that a majority of urban and rural poor households with members suffering road traffic injury were not poor before the loss of a wage earner. And there is a devastating impact on education with hundreds of thousands of school-age children in low and middle-income countries losing their right to an education every year due to road traffic injury.⁸

⁵ See OWG 7 TST Issues Brief Sustainable Transport

http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2634Issues%20Brief%20on%20Sustainable%20Transport_FINAL_21_Nov.pdf

⁶ http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2013/en/

⁷ Commission for Global Road Safety. Safe Roads for All: A Post-2015 Agenda for Health and Development.

http://www.makeroadssafe.org/Documents/mrs_safe_roads_for_all.pdf

⁸ Ibid.