

Time for Results: Road safety and clean air for all, leaving no one behind

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This brief outlines priorities to prevent road traffic injuries and deaths and improve air quality, highlighting the need to protect vulnerable populations such as children. It explores the main challenges in these areas, as well as ways of financing actions to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 1.25 million people die and 50 million are injured on the world's roads annually, costing governments approximately 3% of their GDP (WHO, 2015a). While overall road traffic fatalities have stabilized since 100 countries sponsored the launch of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety in 2010 (WHO, 2011), 68 middle and low-income countries have seen casualties rise (WHO, 2015).

Road crashes are the leading cause of death for school-aged children worldwide (iRAP, 2015), with poor children particularly likely to be killed or injured (Laflamme and Diderichsen, 2000). Poor people in developing countries frequently walk or cycle to reach work, school, and other services as they cannot afford motorised transport (Howe and Bryson, 2000).

The World Health Organization estimates that 7 million people die each year as a result of poor air quality. Around 200,000 of these deaths are likely to be attributable to vehicles worldwide (World Bank et al, 2010). In the absence of new policies deaths could increase by 50 percent worldwide by 2030 from 2013 levels (Chambliss et al, 2013). SDG targets 3.9 and 11.6 highlight the importance of reducing deaths and impacts from poor air quality.

The inclusion of road safety targets in the SDGs must mark a step-change in the world's response to road traffic injuries. In November 2015, the 2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety, held in Brasilia with the theme "Time for Results," provided a platform to accelerate momentum. 2,200 delegates from over 110 countries attended, including 70 ministers of health, transport, and interior, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, Director-General of the WHO, Dr. Margaret Chan, and Global Ambassador for Road Safety, Zoleka Mandela.

130 Countries approved the Brasilia Declaration, outlining a path to achieve SDG targets 3.6 and 11.2. Target 3.6 strives to by 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents, and target 11.2 aspires to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, including both private and public transport's role within urban areas (WHO, 2015b).

2. Ensuring no one is left behind

Opening the Brasilia Global High Level Conference on Road Safety, Zoleka Mandela said, "We are doing almost nothing to halt the biggest killer of our young people. We have the answers. We know exactly how to cure this epidemic. And yet, we are failing to take action. And we are failing our children," (FIA Foundation, 2015a).

Roads are the leading killer of children ages 15-29, a most vulnerable population (WHO, 2015a). Other vulnerable populations include women, older persons, people with disabilities, and low income individuals who cannot afford safe or accessible transit options. The Brasilia Declaration highlighted the need to protect vulnerable populations by

bridging the gap between the public health and transportation sectors. It emphasized the opportunity to promote sound, safe, accessible, and affordable quality modes of transport in urban areas, where the majority of road deaths and injuries occur.

Children are also particularly vulnerable to poor air quality as their lungs are still developing. Ensuring safe routes for walking and cycling, alongside reducing vehicle emissions, must be reflected in the New Urban Agenda (WHO, 2015a).

3. Priorities to achieve urgent urban health goals

There are six key areas which would help contribute to reducing road traffic deaths and injuries, and the success of targets 3.6 and 11.2 (FIA Foundation, 2015a):

1. Worldwide, there should be 100% car seatbelt and motorcycle crash helmet use by 2020.
2. By 2020, the 10% highest risk roads should meet a minimum of three stars out of five safety rating for all road users.
3. All new cars should meet minimum UN safety standards by 2020. Currently, a third of new cars on the road (20 million) do not meet these standards.
4. Design for all pavements and separate bicycle lanes should be provided to encourage active mobility.
5. Comprehensive speed laws and lower speed zones are needed in residential areas and near schools.
6. All children should have a safe route to and from school by 2030.

Improving air quality will require a combination of 'avoid', 'shift' and 'improve' measures. These include reducing unnecessary vehicle trips, shifting vehicles journeys to public transport of non-motorized modes such as walking and cycling – which can also have significant health benefits. It is also possible to promote vehicles with lower emissions, either through improved standards or

fiscal incentives, including for electric and zero emission (from tailpipe) vehicles.

4. Challenges

With five years to achieve the SDG target of halving global road traffic deaths by 2020, we need urgent results. High income countries must partner with and support developing nations. Increased and new sources of financing must be unlocked to kick-start and reinforce national road safety strategies. We must meet the core indicators in the Global Plan for the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety (FIA Foundation, 2015b).

There are three key challenges facing the road safety movement:

1. To secure sufficient international catalytic financing to assist governments of middle- and low income countries to take the initial steps – building the institutional capacity, political will and evidence base - necessary to unlock sustainable sources of domestic funding to deliver long-term road safety strategies;
2. To persuade finance ministers and private investors of the strong case for investment in safe and sustainable transport modes; that this isn't an optional extra, but should be mainstreamed into every transportation and land-planning decision;
3. To integrate road safety and sustainable transport into the new financing mechanisms intended to support delivery of the SDGs.

Improving air quality can face similar challenges – particularly in countries where air quality is an 'invisible killer' as emissions such as nitrous oxides (NOx) are not visible. In countries with high levels of particulate emissions, with serious cases of smog and low visibility, the challenge is galvanizing action and investment in alternatives fast enough to prevent serious health impacts.

Road safety must be delivered by national and local government. In countries where road traffic injuries are on a sustained downward path, this has been achieved by long-term political commitment,

delivered through funded strategies driven by lead agencies or government departments working cooperatively on infrastructure, vehicle standards and maintenance, driver training and licensing, public awareness and police enforcement, and through wider public health strategies. Funding is typically provided through a combination of general taxation, road user charges and taxes, insurance levies, penalty charges (e.g. from speed cameras) and through public/private finance initiatives.

However, in developing countries with limited road safety capacity, there is a need for international financing to support the development of national road safety capacity reviews, political and technical institutional development, initial steps towards effective data management, strategy development and demonstration projects that can translate proven interventions to local circumstances. These steps can create an enabling environment where sustainable political support for long-term action to improve road safety, with revenue streams to back it, becomes possible.

Air quality, as a 'public good' needs to be addressed internationally as well as nationally. However, where these are concentrated in cities, urban authorities can take steps to reduce emissions by discouraging older vehicles and promoting alternatives.

5. Financing

To achieve the SDGs will require a significant increase in international support. For road safety, this requires replenishing an existing fund – such as the Global Road Safety Facility, housed at the World Bank – or launching a new global fund to meet the challenges of the SDG era, and closer alignment with existing and new mechanisms designed to deliver financing for the SDGs, including the new 'Global Infrastructure Forum' agreed as part of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

One form of 'innovative financing' is social impact investing which clearly maps the links between road safety measures and public health outcomes. The funding for the Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) is

provided at risk by social investors whose financial return is aligned to the positive social impact of meeting pre-agreed social outcomes.

Structuring Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) with clear metrics measuring the effects of road safety policies - such as safe infrastructure design or enforcement campaigns - on specific health outcomes (e.g. reduction in number of hospital bed-days relating to road traffic victims) could 'break the deadlock' of decades of transport policy and planning divorced from consideration of public health outcomes. (FIA Foundation, 2015c).

Similar 'green bonds' – linking investment to reductions in carbon emissions – can also be used to finance investment in low emissions public vehicles, or investments in walking and cycling infrastructure.

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