

SP7 ROAD SAFETY ISSUES AND POLICIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Road accidents are a major health issue with 1.2 million casualties worldwide a year, and are the leading cause of death in people aged 10 to 25. Road safety related economic loss is very high in developing countries: 2.5% of GDP in Morocco, 3% in India. In low and middle income countries, road accident injuries are expected to grow 83% from 2000 to 2020.

This is tragic. This is avoidable. This is a major political challenge for developing countries.

The Special Session 7 of the World Road Congress on “Road safety issues and policies in developing countries”, through presentations and interventions from various Countries (China, Costa Rica, Ghana, India and Morocco) and from various organizations (*Conférence Interafricaine des Métiers de l'Assurance*, FIA Foundation, the Global Road Safety Partnership, World Bank and PIARC), offered the possibility to determine a list of recommendations and to pave the way for possible and necessary actions in the field:

Recommendations to Decision makers

- Political awareness for road safety has to be raised and maintained high on the agenda in all countries. Continued effort and involvement from all decision makers is required, following up on UN and WHO resolutions as well as renewed commitment from the World Bank and from numerous national, regional and local authorities;
- Actions and policies in the field have to be structured around the human being. But they have also to involve actively the society as a whole in a cooperative, self-improving and perennial manner;
- At the national level, all stakeholders such as emergency services, the police, road engineers, schools, insurance companies etc. must get involved in road safety, and their actions must be prioritised and coordinated (case of the National Road Safety Commission of Ghana for instance). This requires commitment at the highest political level and the establishment of a comprehensive national plan, such as in China or India;
- Appropriate driver and passenger behaviour must be enforced and improved through lifelong education efforts, as well as through legal and police measures (such as the seat belt law in Costa Rica). Traffic laws have to be enforced. On this point, controlling vehicle characteristics and loads are also important safety measures;
- Special attention must be paid to vulnerable road users. Mixed traffic is a source of danger, thus separated lanes for pedestrians and cyclists are a useful option;
- The infrastructure itself has to be improved in order to continuously improve road safety and should be adapted so that road users increasingly avoid accidents and that the accidents' consequences are mitigated. Effective measures do exist in that scheme. They must be implemented according to their cost, effectiveness, feasibility and acceptability;

- On a global level, a number of large road networks are being planned for and built. They must incorporate road safety standards and features. A percentage of each project funds should be set aside for road safety related tasks and projects;
- The existing road network can also be improved, since (low cost) measures do exist. As a minimum prerequisite, regular road maintenance must be enforced;
- Road safety action has to be particularly targeted to the highest concentrations of deaths and injuries on the road network: 20% of the network usually accounts for more than 70% of all accidents;
- Donor organizations should set the example for the road projects that they finance. They should make preliminary safety audits a compulsory condition for the funding for any road projects, and they should also continue making funding available for all road safety measures.

Technical aspects related to infrastructure and accident data

- National road design standards must be updated so that they continuously incorporate best practices on road safety;
- Road safety audits of new projects should be put into practice immediately. They are quite inexpensive to implement and the return on investment is very significant;
- As concerns the existing network, road safety inspections on the whole network as well as the treatment of accident accumulation locations ("hazardous spots") are required;
- Also, a set of comprehensive accident data is a prerequisite in order to target the measures to where they are most needed. Therefore, each country needs to develop a national accident data collection strategy and to enforce it in cooperation with the various parties concerned (police forces etc.). This can be helped by the fact that local population or hospitals already possess valuable information;
- Guidelines already exist regarding improvement of road safety. They have to be adapted to the local contexts and needs, and to be put into practice.

Recommendations to International Road Organisations and PIARC

- The appropriate technical and organizational knowledge already exists and decision makers should promote knowledge exchange, on the national and international levels.
- Workshops at the regional and local levels and teaching efforts in particular seem very effective and should be pursued.

Among the ongoing initiatives, the following actions were pointed out:

- the role of PIARC and in particular its Technical Committee 3.1 on Road Safety, both by elaborating reference documents and by organizing regional seminars in Africa and South America on "Road Safety and Infrastructures". These efforts should be pursued and expanded during the 2008-2011 strategic plan.
- the "Make Roads Safe" initiative launched by the Commission for Global Road Safety to the attention of the General Secretary of the United Nations, aiming at

collecting 1,5 million signatures by April 2008. This initiative is supported by the FIA Foundation ;

- the actions of GRSP in the field of knowledge sharing and communication ;
- Also, participants noted with satisfaction the World Bank's creation of a facility dedicated to road safety in developing countries, and hoped that this would give an impetus to the setting up of actions in the field./.