

MAKE ROADS SAFE

A DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY

Executive Summary



**Commission for
Global Road Safety**

FOREWORD: DESMOND TUTU

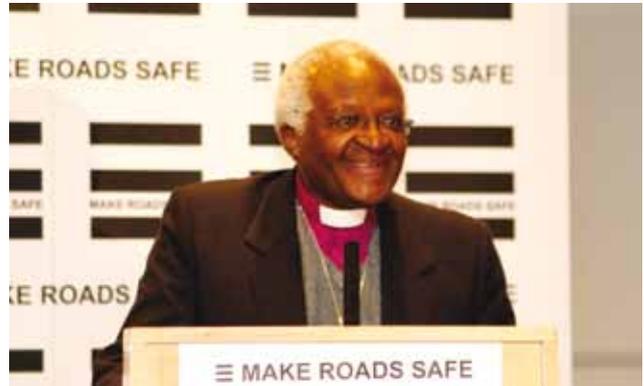
From time to time in human history there comes a killer epidemic that is not recognised for what it is and is not acted against until it is almost too late. HIV/AIDS, which is ravaging Sub Saharan Africa, is one such. Road traffic injuries have the potential to be another.

We ignore road crashes at our peril. This epidemic is invisible through its ubiquity, yet when we stop to add together the daily toll in each neighbourhood or city, each country and region, we can comprehend the true tragedy: 3,500 people killed every day, thousands more seriously injured; 260,000 children killed every year, and more than a million more seriously injured, with barely a voice raised in protest.

This is predominately a killer of the poor. It is the poorest communities which live alongside the fastest roads. It is the poorest children who have to negotiate the most dangerous routes to school. It is the most vulnerable road users, pedestrians and cyclists, who are at greatest risk yet are the most routinely forgotten by the planners and policymakers.



Desmond Tutu
Emeritus Archbishop of Cape Town



In March 2008 I was pleased to add my name to an Open Letter to the United Nations calling for a first ever Global Ministerial Conference on road safety and was delighted when the UN General Assembly approved the proposal. Now, as we prepare for this historic meeting in Moscow in November, it is time for those who can make a real difference – the governments, international financial institutions, the donor community, development activists and the millions who are angry but silent – to step up to meet this challenge and to commit to a Decade of Action for Road Safety.

INTRODUCTION: LORD ROBERTSON

By 2015 road crashes are predicted by the WHO to be the leading cause of premature death and disability for children aged five and above. Hopefully by 2015 much progress will have been made in reaching the Millennium Development Goals but this achievement will be cruelly overshadowed if the largely avoidable slaughter of the young on the world's roads continues unchecked. This epidemic on wheels - which already kills on the scale of malaria - will continue to rob even more families of their loved ones and their livelihoods, as the number of those killed doubles to well over two million per year by 2030.

Yet we have the opportunity now to change direction.

We have seen a decade of preparation and progress in building global road safety capacity and policies, designing and testing effective interventions and raising awareness of this neglected epidemic. Through the work of the UN Road Safety Collaboration, the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility and the Global Road Safety Partnership we have a strong, collaborative, road safety community poised for action if they are funded appropriately.

A Global Ministerial Meeting on Road Safety, first proposed by our Commission in 2006 and endorsed last year by the United Nations will meet in Moscow in November 2009 hosted by President Medvedev of the Russian Federation. The Moscow Conference is a unique opportunity for the international community to respond to the road crash epidemic with the vision and urgency that it deserves.

This report calls for a Decade of Action for Road Safety to be launched by the UN in 2010 with the goal of reducing the forecast level of road deaths in 2020 by 50%. It offers ten key recommendations to the Moscow Ministerial and the United Nations set out in the Executive Summary on pages four and five. The main report, reviewed by, and with contributions from, the world's leading road safety experts, explains how with serious political commitment, sufficient international



donor support for capacity building, and sustained national prioritisation of road injury prevention, we could collectively prevent five million deaths, and fifty million serious injuries, between now and 2020.

Five million lives: this is what is at stake in a Decade of Action for Road Safety. Five million people whose potential can be realised, not wasted; five million families that need never know the sudden loss and lifelong grief of a road crash bereavement. This is a prize well worth investing in, safe in the knowledge that the returns, human and economic, will far outweigh the investment cost.

We have the tools, the knowledge, to undertake this work. Now we need to see the political will to implement a Decade of Action. The United Nations has recognised that the global road injury epidemic is serious enough to warrant General Assembly resolutions and a first Ministerial-level conference. The Commission for Global Road Safety, therefore, urges the Moscow Ministerial and the UN General Assembly to recognise that now is the time for a UN Decade of Action for Road Safety committed to reducing by half the forecast level of road deaths in 2020.

Let's commit to work together for a decade that could save five million lives and start to make roads safe for us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "C. Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Rt. Hon. Lord Robertson of Port Ellen
Chairman, Commission for Global Road Safety

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Road crashes kill at least 1.3 million people each year and injure 50 million, a toll greater than deaths from Malaria. Ninety percent of these road casualties are in low and middle income countries. Each year 260,000 children die on the road and another million are seriously injured, often permanently disabled. By 2015 road crashes are predicted by WHO to be the leading cause of premature death and disability for children aged 5 and above. This hidden road injury epidemic is a crisis for public health and a major contributor to the causes of poverty. Yet aid agencies, development NGOs, philanthropic foundations and key international institutions continue to neglect or ignore this rapidly growing problem.

Road traffic fatalities are forecast to increase over the next ten years from a current level of more than 1.3 million to more than 1.9 million by 2020. The Commission for Global Road Safety believes that the urgent priority is to halt this appalling and avoidable rise in road injury and then begin to achieve year on year reductions. The world could prevent 5 million deaths and 50 million serious injuries by 2020 by dramatically scaling up investment in road safety, at global, regional and national levels.

The first Global Ministerial Meeting on road safety, to be held in Moscow in November 2009 has the opportunity to set a new direction for global road safety. The UN General Assembly will then debate the results of the Moscow Ministerial during its 64th Session. The Commission, therefore, makes the following ten recommendations to the Moscow Ministerial and UN General Assembly:

1. The Moscow Ministerial should support, and the UN General Assembly approve, the proposal that a Decade of Action for Road Safety be launched by the United Nations in 2010, with the objective of reducing the forecast level of road deaths for 2020 by 50%.
2. Governments should commit to attain the Decade goal by implementing a five pillar Action Plan designed to (1) build management capacity, (2) influence road design and network management, (3) influence vehicle safety design, (4) influence road user behaviour and (5) improve post crash care.
3. Low and middle-income countries will be expending billions of dollars in road infrastructure and transport over the coming decades and it will be crucial that they sharpen their investment focus on improving safety outcomes. To catalyze this process the international community, including donor governments and private philanthropic foundations, should invest US\$300 million in the proposed ten year Action Plan to build global, regional and country capacity, enable pilot and demonstration projects and encourage increased national investments in road safety.
4. Governments should commit to implement a series of specific and achievable actions at regional and national level, including setting ambitious road casualty reduction targets, the creation of a lead road safety agency (e.g. with legally established responsibilities and sustainable funding sources) and harmonised systems of data collection (e.g. compliance with prescribed International Road Traffic Accident Database – IRTAD Group – benchmarks).
5. Governments should establish 2020 targets for: improved infrastructure safety (e.g. compliance with prescribed user protection scores); improved vehicle safety (e.g. compliance at minimum with prescribed crash ratings); improved road user behaviour (e.g. compliance with prescribed seat belt and motorcycle helmet wearing rates); adherence to prescribed blood alcohol levels, and compliance with prescribed speed limits; and improved post-crash responses (e.g. compliance with prescribed injury crash response times).
6. The World Bank and the regional development banks, together with donor nations, should ensure that at least 10% of the cost of their road investment projects are dedicated to safety rating, assessment and infrastructure improvement (e.g. safety barriers, pedestrian facilities, roundabouts, motor cycle lanes, etc). This principle should be applied by donors in line with the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
7. Governments in high income countries should lead by example by continuing to make progress in improving their road safety performance, by the adoption of a 'safe systems' approach to road safety, as recommended by the OECD/ITF 'Towards Zero' expert report.
8. High-income, high performing countries should also recognise their obligation to share their experience

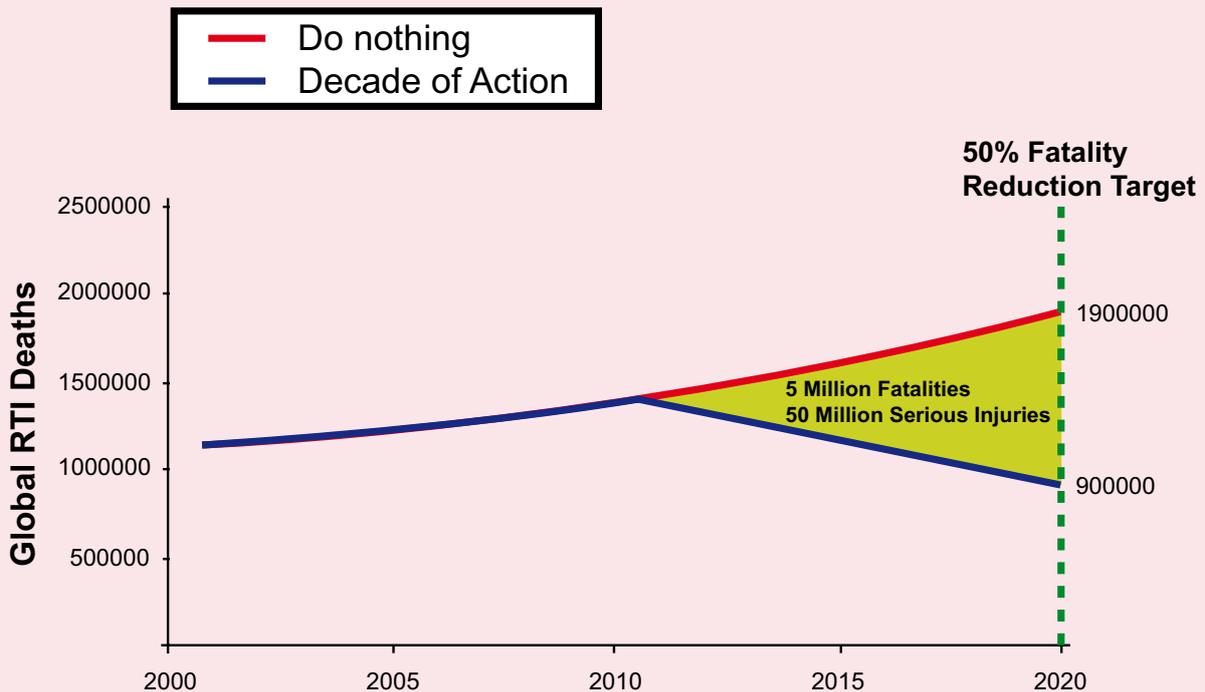
rience and know-how with low and middle income countries, through study exchanges and technical partnerships, and by enabling the transfer of knowledge and supporting implementation projects.

- The Commission urges that the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) ensure that road safety is for the first time fully recognised as a key contributor to sustain-

able development and the Millennium Development Goals when it examines transport in its forthcoming policy cycle review (2010-2011).

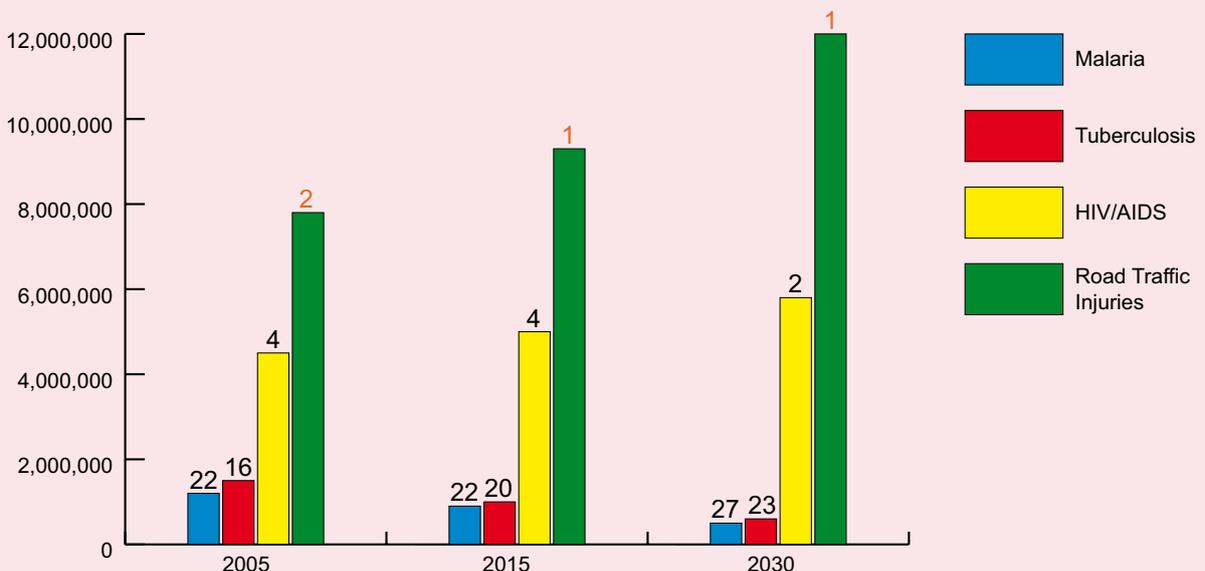
- The UN Secretary General should appoint a UN Special Envoy for Road Safety to encourage progress and raise awareness during the Decade of Action which should be subject to a mid-term review in 2015.

CHANGING DIRECTION: POTENTIAL OF A DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY



Source: Guria, J (2009)

PROJECTED DALYS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: (CHILDREN AGED 5 - 14)



Source: Mather C, Loncar D (2005)

FEATURE 1:

Special Contribution: Kevin Watkins

The world is turning a blind eye

When we try to understand a humanitarian disaster our instinct is to reach for statistics. Headcount numbers provide us with a convenient measure of the numbers involved and the scale of the impact. Unfortunately, they can also sanitise reality and hide the human faces of the victims. Numbers are more abstract than names, and they deflect our attention from the lives of those affected. So here are some of the names and the faces of the people affected by the humanitarian crisis that happens every day on the world's roads:

- Rohit Yadav, a fourth year student of Bhave Primary School, Delhi, was knocked off his bicycle by a truck and crushed under its rear wheels. His sister, Vandana, has become speechless as a result of the trauma.
- Le Xuan Han, from Ho Chi Minh City, died just before her ninth birthday. She was travelling to a party with her sister on the back of her father's bike, which was hit by a drunk driver. Han died as a result of head injuries.
- Mukelebai Mumbuna, aged 26, from Lusaka died when her bus crashed in Zambia's Eastern Province after the driver, who was speeding in heavy rain, lost control at a corner. She was the mother of a five month old boy.
- John Njau, from Nairobi, Kenya, was paralysed in July 2007 when the taxi that he was sharing swerved across a lane and was hit by a truck. He was the family's sole breadwinner – and his children have since been unable to buy books for school.

These are just four names and four of the lives lost on the world's roads. Each year, road traffic injuries claim at least 1.3 million lives. Tens of millions more are left injured. Many of the victims are drawn from the ranks of the world's most vulnerable citizens: its children. Young children account for one-in-every five deaths - and almost one million are left with a permanent disability. In the time that it takes you to read this feature, another two young lives will have been lost somewhere. And behind the big numbers are human tragedies. For every death, there is a grieving family, or a child deprived of the love, the warmth and support of a parent. For every serious injury, there is a family that lives with the consequences and the financial costs.

It is time for the international community to see the road injury crisis for the humanitarian catastrophe that it is. For too long, governments have treated that catastrophe as a side-issue to be dealt with by transport ministers. They need to start treating it as a national emergency. We are confronted by an epidemic that kills and maims on the scale of major infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. If civilians were killed in a conflict on the scale that they are killed on the world's roads, international condemnation and calls for action would be guaranteed. Yet the slaughter barely registers in international media interest, let alone on the agendas of high-level meetings. Perhaps that's because most of the victims are poor people living in the world's poorest countries. Most of the projected increase in deaths to 2020 will happen in the same countries. Fatalities will almost double in Africa and more than double in South Asia.

We need to find a new vocabulary to discuss the roads crisis. Pick up any newspaper in a developing country and you are virtually guaranteed to find a headline story somewhere about a 'road accident' that has killed people and shattered lives. The truth is that these events are not 'accidents'. They are the consequence of bad policies, of government neglect, and of the indifference of the international community.

Road injury is conspicuous by its absence from the international development agenda. That is – quite literally - a fatal failure of political leadership. Measured on a narrow economic calculus, the costs of business-as-usual are enormous. Road injuries are costing many of the world's poorest countries 1-3 per cent of the GDP, acting as a brake on economic growth. Simple cost-benefit analysis makes its own case for action. As this report documents, every \$1 invested in road safety can save as much as \$20 in lost earnings, reduced productivity, and health costs. Instead of asking themselves whether their country can afford to invest in road safety, finance ministers might ask themselves whether it can afford not to.

The implications of road injuries for the Millennium Development Goals ought to be the subject of urgent review. Most of the victims of road injuries are poor. Labourers walking to work by the side of roads, small farmers, women carrying goods to market, and – of course – children in slums all figure prominently in the roll-call of victims. And every crash or injury has long-term consequences. When a breadwinner dies, families lose the income they need to maintain nutrition, purchase essential medicines, or meet the cost of keeping children in school. The medical bills that come with road traffic injury can plunge households into debt and trap them in poverty. And then there are the mental scars.

The world is making progress in getting children into school. But how many children sitting in classrooms today have seen their education potential blighted by the psychological scars and post-traumatic stress caused by road injury?

When it comes to road injuries, economic common-sense and ethical imperative both point in the same direction. Whether your starting point is economic growth, poverty reduction, social justice or human rights, there is no case for turning a blind eye to the endless toll of dead bodies and broken limbs. Yet the truth is that too many people and organisations with the power to make a difference are turning a blind eye.

Reading through this report I was struck time and again by just how quickly we could turn this crisis around. We are not dealing here with a disease that challenges our scientific knowledge, with a complex financial crisis, or with natural disaster that we are powerless to predict. What we are dealing with is roads which cut through villages, which lack cross points for children walking to school, and which are built to maximise car speed with scant regard for people. Road design problems are compounded by simple regulatory failures – like the failure to enforce rules requiring people on bikes to wear crash helmets, the failure to set and maintain credible vehicle safety standards, and the failure to enforce speed limits.

If you think that the problem is just too daunting to tackle in the face of other priorities, then think again. Countries like Viet Nam have cut road deaths through the simple expedient of enforcing crash helmet laws. In Malaysia, Costa Rica and South Africa, pilot projects on road safety have shown how thousands of lives can be saved through simple design. In Uganda, a programme on enhanced traffic enforcement cut road deaths by 17 per cent. Scaling-up measures like these over a ten year period could save 5 million lives and avoid 50 million serious injuries over the decade to 2020. Is the proposed catalytic Action Plan at \$300 million affordable? In a world where senior executives at just one failed financial institution – the American Insurance Group – get an annual bonus of \$165m that is a question does not deserve to be taken seriously.



But there is another question that does have to be taken seriously. If so much could be achieved with such high returns, why is so little being done? The answer to that question demands some serious reflection. Too often, governments in developing countries and the development economists that advise them measure the success of their roads policies in kilometres of asphalt and the speed at which goods can be carried. Perhaps the health professionals who deal with the consequences of this 'vision' could be asked to organise guided tours of the trauma units and the morgues where the victims end up.

Some aid donors are starting to take road safety seriously. But they are too few in number – and road safety remains the poor cousin of road building. The World Bank and the regional development banks, with a roads portfolio of \$4 billion, have just one road safety specialist between them. The same lack of capacity is true of most bilateral donors.

Campaigning organisations also have to do more. While issues such as education, infectious diseases, and the MDGs have been taken up by non-government organisations, where are the great campaigns for road safety? And why is it that the linkages between 1.3 million road deaths and poverty remain an institutionalised blind spot?

None of this is to point the finger of blame. All of us can – and must – do more. The proposed Decade of Action is a real opportunity for us to work together in pushing the deadly virus of road injury on to the international agenda. But that opportunity will pass unless we seize the moment and work together to put in place an action plan that saves lives. We cannot afford to carry on like this. Our collective negligence is killing people like Rohit Yadav, Le Xuan Han and Mukelebai Mumbuna. And it is holding back the fight against poverty.

Dr Kevin Watkins is Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the Global Economic Governance Programme, Oxford University. He is a former Director of the UN Human Development Report Office and was previously Head of Research for Oxfam UK.

SUPPORT FOR THE MAKE ROADS SAFE CAMPAIGN

“It is time for those who can make a real difference to step up to meet this challenge and to commit to a Decade of Action for Road Safety.”

Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

“The efforts of the Commission for Global Road Safety to promote better road safety worldwide are to be applauded”

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

“Every three minutes a child dies on the world’s roads and these lives can be saved. We need a global action plan to ensure that key safety measures are put in place.”

Sonia Gandhi, President, Indian National Congress

“Travel-related injuries and deaths affect millions of people around the world. I’m hopeful that action can be taken to ensure that no one dies before their time”

Bill Clinton, former US President

“I welcome and support the valuable work which the Commission for Global Road Safety is undertaking”

Tony Blair, former UK Prime Minister

“I am supporting the Make Roads Safe campaign and I call for a ‘Decade of Action’ which is essential if we are to save lives around the world.”

Oscar Arias Sanchez, President of Costa Rica, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

“During my travels I have seen how important it is that children and communities are educated about road safety and that governments and decision makers do what they can to make roads safe.”

Ewan McGregor, actor and UNICEF ambassador

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