

Starting 6 May, the second Global Road Safety Week aims to emphasize the urgent need to improve the safety of pedestrians, generate action on required measures to do so and contribute to achieving the ambitious goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 to save 5 million lives. In addition, improvements in pedestrian safety could lead to an increase in walking, which would have a positive impact on health and the broader sustainable development agenda.

The second Global Road Safety Week was requested in April 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution A/66/L.43 on “Improving global road safety”. The weeklong awareness campaign is in line with the Decade of Action on Road Safety and builds on the wealth of information presented by the Global status report on road safety 2013.

The Global status report shows that pedestrians constitute a major group at risk of death, injury and disability on the roads, and that they are among the most vulnerable road users (along with cyclists and motorcyclists). Around half of road traffic deaths globally are borne by vulnerable road users and about a quarter are borne by pedestrians.

The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region is home to 10% of all global road traffic fatalities. Again, vulnerable road users bear 45% of deaths. In 2010, it is estimated that pedestrian deaths accounted for 28% of regional road traffic deaths. The Eastern Mediterranean ranks second among WHO regions in the proportion of pedestrian deaths among all road traffic deaths (28%), after the African Region (38%). Yet only a few of its countries have developed national policies and enabling environments to encourage safer walking and cycling, and to separate vulnerable road users.

Pedestrian-related risks factors are no secret. Key risk factors include unsafe driver behaviour, particularly speeding and drink–driving; infrastructure-related factors including insufficient dedicated pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, crossings and raised medians; and aspects of vehicle design such as the shape and stiffness of vehicle fronts that can reduce the severity of injuries to pedestrians when hit by a vehicle. The efficiency and quality of trauma care services is another important factor for delivery of the urgent treatment needed to save pedestrian lives in the event they are involved in a collision.

Other important regional highlights include the following findings.

All countries have national speed laws, but these laws are comprehensive in only two countries, setting an urban speed limit of 50 km/h or less and allow local authorities to further reduce these limits.

Less than two thirds of countries have drink-driving laws based on blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and of these, 37% stipulate BAC limits of 0.05 g/dl or less.

89% of countries have national legislation prohibiting the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving, and 21% of countries prohibit the use of both hand-held and hands-free mobile phones.

Legislation on key risk factors is available in many countries, but most laws are not comprehensive. This, together with inadequate enforcement, limits their effectiveness.

Only 21% of countries have national and subnational policies to encourage walking (and/or cycling).

Only 26% of countries have national or subnational policies to separate vulnerable road users from other types of road users in the street.

The heavy toll of injury, disability and death borne by pedestrians is unacceptable, not only because of the incalculable human loss but also because pedestrian-related collisions, like other road crashes, are both predictable and preventable.

Pedestrian safety is not only about individual behaviour. It cannot be resolved by adopting a single isolated intervention but is the outcome of a number of actions based on comprehensive multisectoral collaboration between key stakeholders using a safe systems approach to address different aspects of the problem through: road safety management; safety of roads and vehicles; safer behaviour of all road users; improved legislation and enforcement; and strengthened post-crash care.

The second Global Road Safety Week 2013 is a milestone event along the course of the Decade of Action for Road Safety. It is a unique opportunity to further road safety at all levels, through renewed commitment and efforts, and to save the thousands of lives that continue to be lost on our roads yearly as we move towards the goal of the Decade.

Tuesday 23rd of April 2024 08:27:14 AM