

## Road Safety Measures Needed in Vietnam

Road traffic injuries are becoming a growing concern in Vietnam. The roadside injuries are not only causing a high number of fatalities but are directly affecting the Vietnamese youth. This is because of relaxed laws regarding safety helmets and other safety standards that are not enforced. For example, head related trauma could be prevented by properly using safety helmets when riding in two-wheel vehicles in the overcrowded roads of Vietnam. Specific interventions like providing access to adequate safety helmets or enforced road safety laws could save innocent lives and prevent the deaths of many innocent adults and children.

## Vietnamese Youth and Head Related Trauma

Road traffic injuries are responsible for almost a third of all disability-adjusted life years lost due to injury, and they are the fifth biggest cause of mortality in the Western Pacific region, accounting for 1.3 million deaths worldwide each year (Bao et al., 2017). In the Western Pacific Region, fatal traffic accidents continue to be the primary cause of death for both men and women in the 15–29 and 30–44 age categories (Bao et al., 2017). When compared to other age groups, young males aged 20 to 29 predominated all fatalities and deaths from motorcycle accidents, and the distribution of deaths varied substantially across different socio-demographic strata (Ngo et al., 2012). More focus on maintaining and overseeing law enforcement on helmet use and drunk driving control measures in the promotion of traffic safety behaviors for young people will considerably improve injury control and prevention efforts. (Le & Blum, 2013). Furthermore, no adolescent health policy should ignore this issue in injury control because injury patterns now suggest that females are growing more vulnerable to injuries from road traffic (Le & Blum, 2013).



## Factors Contributing to Road Traffic Injuries

In Vietnam, where there has been explosive expansion in motorization, motorcyclists frequently dominate the flow of traffic on mixed-use roads and rapid economic growth has been accompanied by this trend creating an overpopulation of vehicles on the road (Ngo et al., 2012). Additionally, physical road safety measures including proper lane distribution, improved road surface, paved shoulders, and the construction of traffic signs, signals, and pedestrian crossings are still insufficient and significantly contribute to roadside fatalities (Ngo et al., 2012). This causes an overflow of traffic and drivers may feel uncertain operating a vehicle where safety measures are not adequately measured which causes drivers to be more prone to crashes.

## Inadequate Safety Helmets

This is a huge factor to the problem of roadside fatalities as 25.9% of assessed helmets were classified as "cap helmets," which are deficient in the foam lining required to provide wearers with acceptable head protection and these cap helmets are not legally compliant with the National Technical Regulation's standards for satisfactory quality (Asian Injury Prevention Foundation, 2022). There is a need that all safety helmets should follow the National Technical Regulation before being distributed to the public. A helmet must be worn by all motorcycle riders and passengers in Vietnam as of December 15, 2007, according to Resolution 32, a law issued by the Vietnamese government (Pervin, 2009).

## Relaxed Child Safety Laws

The new helmet law did not specifically exempt children, but it was not entirely in line with existing law because, according to Vietnam's Administrative Sanctions Ordinance, children under the age of 14 cannot receive sanctions, including fines for not wearing a helmet (Pervin, 2009). This adds to the number of factors for safety concerns that children or their guardian will have no repercussions for not wearing a helmet. There is a need for an innovative solution to show children that wearing a helmet saves lives.

## Impact of Roadside Accidents

On average, road accidents cost developing countries 3-5% of their annual GDP, and a dangerous combination of bad roads, untrained drivers, unsafe automobiles, and escalating heavy traffic jeopardizes the safety of both the workforce and the public. (Asian Injury Prevention Foundation, 2019). The impact of roadside accidents and deaths can cause families to lose wages, limits safe travel to work and prevents the economy from growing. It could directly impact children as they may not be able to safely travel to school.

## International Organizations

The Government of Vietnam is currently receiving support from several international organizations, including the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation, UNICEF, and WHO, in its efforts to encourage the use of helmets among children through a variety of mechanisms, including advocacy, social marketing, and support for capacity-building to improve road safety (Pervin, 2009). These entities through collaboration can benefit the Vietnamese population and create specific resources like access to safety helmets to reduce roadside death and prevent injury.

## Enforcement of Helmet Safety Laws

Compulsory helmet use laws combined with enforcement and sanctions have demonstrated to raise the likelihood of helmet use five times, making them one of the most effective strategies to reduce behavioral risk factors for traffic (Bao et al., 2017). This intervention can be supported by advocating for policy change through international organizations that support roadside safety. The need to enforce helmet safety laws will reduce risk factors and save lives. Furthermore, if the Vietnamese government recognizes that these safety helmets can help with their GDP they may be more inclined to assist organizations with providing enforcement on helmets safety law.

## Promising Approach for Improved Results.

The safe systems approach has taken center stage and is being adopted in many settings throughout the world because it acknowledges that various sectors need to work together to limit the likelihood of catastrophic accidents and their effects (Mock et al., 2017). This approach's guiding principles include acknowledging human error in transportation systems, appreciating human physical vulnerability and fallibility, encouraging shared accountability of systems, integrating interventions, and developing intersectoral approaches (Mock et al., 2017) The safe systems concept must be a component of a national road safety plan and an integrated policy framework that specify goals and objectives based on the burden of road traffic incidents at the population level in order for it to be effective (Mock et al., 2017). It focuses on the special strengths of each sector's ministries, other governmental agencies, corporate organizations, and NGOs to systematically integrate road safety into various policies (Mock et al., 2017). The barriers to using this approach is if synergy is not created amongst organizations, it would be difficult to utilize as it is based on interconnectedness with other organizations.

## European Commission and UN Collaboration

This organization is in line with the safe systems approach as it promotes the use of other related policy channels to find areas of integration in road safety regulation (Mock et al., 2017). Their interventions are specifically through policy change and research which allow for safer roads.

This collaboration is an excellent example of bringing together various sectors and stakeholders at the international level to promote comprehensive multisectoral approaches which alleviate the burden of road traffic incidents (Mock et al., 2017). Their work is essential in creating safe roads by advocating for more research and working with governments on policy around roadside safety

## Conclusion

Roadside safety is being addressed through organizations like Asian Injury Prevention Foundation and The United Nations Road Safety Collaboration through a safe systems approach which serves as model for other NGOs preventing roadside injuries. However, to be more effective in providing access to adequate safety helmets in Vietnam funding will be needed. Access to safety helmets, policy change and enforced safety laws are the most effective interventions and with more international support lives can be saved and injuries prevented from roadside accidents.

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