

helmets

A ROAD SAFETY MANUAL
FOR DECISION-MAKERS
AND PRACTITIONERS

Helmet

A road safety manual for
decision-makers and
practitioners



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Preface

Road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and a leading cause of death and injury around the world. Each year nearly 1.2 million people die and millions more are injured or disabled as a result of road crashes, mostly in low-income and middle-income countries. As well as creating enormous social costs for individuals, families and communities, road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on health services and economies. The cost to countries, possibly already struggling with other development concerns, may well be 1%–2% of their gross national product. As motorization increases, road traffic crashes are becoming a fast-growing problem, particularly in developing countries. If present trends continue unchecked, road traffic injuries will increase dramatically in most parts of the world over the next two decades, with the greatest impact falling on the most vulnerable citizens.

Appropriate and targeted action is needed most urgently. The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, launched jointly in 2004 by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, identified improvements in road safety management together with specific actions that have led to dramatic decreases in road traffic deaths and injuries in industrialized countries that have been active in road safety. The use of seat-belts, helmets and child restraints, the report showed, have saved thousands of lives. The introduction of speed limits, the creation of safer infrastructure, the enforcement of blood alcohol content limits and improvements in vehicle safety, are all interventions that have been tested and repeatedly shown to be effective.

The international community must now take the lead encouraging good practice in road safety management and the take up of these interventions in other countries, in ways appropriate to their particular settings. To speed up such efforts, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on 14 April 2004 urging greater attention and resources to be directed towards the global road safety crisis. Resolution 58/289 on “Improving global road safety” stressed the importance of international collaboration in the field of road safety. A further resolution (A58/L.60), passed in October 2005, reaffirmed the United Nation’s commitment to this issue, encouraging Member States to implement the recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, and commending collaborative road safety initiatives so far undertaken towards implementing resolution 58/289. In particular, it encouraged Member States to focus on addressing key risk factors, and to establish lead agencies for road safety.

To contribute to the implementation of these resolutions, the World Health Organization, the Global Road Safety Partnership, the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, and the World Bank, have collaborated to produce a series of manuals aimed at policy-makers and practitioners. This manual is one of them. Each provides

step-by-step guidance to countries wishing to improve road safety organisation and to implement the specific road safety interventions outlined in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. They propose simple, effective and cost-effective solutions that can save many lives and reduce the shocking burden of road traffic crashes around the world. We would encourage all to use these manuals.

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Executive summary

Along with a global increase in motorization, particularly in low-income and middle-income countries, the use of motorized two-wheelers and bicycles is growing rapidly in many places. As a result, there are increasing fatalities and injuries among users of two-wheelers, with head injuries being a major concern. Motorcycle and bicycle helmets are effective both in preventing head injuries and in reducing the severity of injuries sustained by riders and passengers of two-wheelers.

Unfortunately, in many countries the use of helmets is low. The *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* described how wearing helmets would save many lives. Consequently, the Report recommended that countries set and enforce helmet laws for drivers and passengers of both motorized two-wheelers and bicycles.

The purpose of this manual is to provide advice on how to increase the use of helmets within a country. The manual is aimed at policy-makers and road safety practitioners and draws on experience from countries that have succeeded in achieving and sustaining high levels of helmet use. It provides the necessary evidence that will be needed to start a helmet use programme, and takes the user through the steps needed to assess the helmet situation in a country. It then explains the steps needed to design and implement a helmet use programme, including: setting up a working group; developing an action plan; introducing and enforcing mandatory helmet laws; creating appropriate standards for helmet production; effectively marketing helmets to the public; educating children and young people on helmet use; and consideration of the capacity for an appropriate medical response to be provided following a crash. Finally, the last section in the manual guides the user on planning and implementing an evaluation of the programme, such that results are fed back into programme design. For each of these activities, the document outlines in a practical way the various steps that need to be taken.

In developing the material for this manual, the writers have drawn on case studies from around the world to illustrate examples of “good practice”. Although the manual is aimed at countries with low use of helmets, the modular structure of the manual means it can be used in countries with very different levels of helmet use. The focus of the manual is on motorcycle helmets, although examples that pertain to bicycle helmet use are also addressed.