

## "Road Safety: Moving from Paper Plans to Effective Actions"

Road Safety Pioneers Webinar, 16 June 2022



16 June 2022

Geneva

Thank you, Ali, for your kind invitation to speak at this Road Safety Pioneers' webinar in the lead up to the UN High Level Meeting on Improving Road Safety.

The title of the webinar "moving from paper plans to action" couldn't be timelier against the backdrop of the Global Plan for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety which, for all intents and purposes, is the "paper plan" that is guiding our various partnerships and projects to improve road safety across the world.

There are many challenges on our endeavour, but I see three main building blocks related to how we could be moving differently in order to secure effective road safety support in developing countries – which is, undoubtedly the group of countries where our focus needs to be if we are serious about halving road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.

The first building block, is about making the issue of road safety 'present'.

Secondly, it is about making it 'personal'.

And, thirdly, it is about making it 'possible'.

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Ensuring successful implementation of the Global Plan calls for a more conscious effort to nestle road safety in today's current context of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening climate crisis. The Global Plan itself explains that "road safety should not be approached as a stand-alone issue but as an integrated component of many different policy agendas, including child health, climate action, gender, and equity. As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for mobility itself will undoubtedly evolve in the next decade and this will inevitably drive changes to transport systems in ways that are both expected and unexpected."

The good news is that there are already road safety projects, initiatives and advocacy efforts that are already underway which clearly demonstrate how road safety is a present-day issue to policymakers and everyday road users. Road safety actors, including the UN Road Safety Collaboration's Streets for Life campaign, the UN Road Safety Fund's SDG Platforms of Engagement and the Global Alliance of NGOs' Global Plan Handovers have heeded that advice of making road safety a "present-day" issue and are showcasing how improving road safety through reduced speed, increased walking and cycling lanes, safer school zones yield tangible benefits that respond to aspects of our current climate and health shocks.

As we have seen from the COVID-19 pandemic, nothing motivates action like the threat of an issue on our personal lives and our livelihoods. Making the road safety challenge personal, is about ensuring that our use and transfer of expertise, knowledge and financial resources work for each of us – whether as cyclists, tourists, pedestrians, motor vehicle drivers or whichever other hat we happen to wear. For that to happen, serious efforts must be enhanced to ensure that domestic policies and road safety priorities align with the needs and risks facing road users in their respective localities, including the vulnerable groups of children, pedestrians, disabled persons and cyclists. The solutions devised to support governments therefore must be done jointly and focused on meeting the realities and expectations of road users in a given community, city or country. Making that connection between road users and policymakers for road safety projects and initiatives will be crucial – this is something I am aware many NGOs are already doing and is something which the Fund is also incentivizing through its ongoing and future Call for Proposals.

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Moreover, in today's world of hyper-communication, it will be just as important to not only involve and personalize road safety among communities and road users, but we also need to invest in telling the human-interest stories emerging from those engagements and also showcasing the road-user level results from road safety initiatives that are working well.

Finally, moving from paper plans to effective actions relies on it being 'possible' to do so through partnerships.

The UN Road Safety Fund pools the world's resources to invest strategically in projects that improve road safety systems in low- and middle-income countries. Our partnership is one of governments, UN agencies, technical bodies, the private sector, the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety and everyday road users who are committed to ending the global road safety crisis.

The current body of knowledge, especially from the World Bank, IRAP and others, already demonstrates the enormous technical challenges and related financing responses required to effectively improve road safety systems. So financing is essential – there is no question about that. However, partnerships are not just about financing.

Here, my first reflection is that we must take a step back and appreciate that we are dealing with a truly devastating global development challenge. Within 24 seconds we lose a life to a road crash, and it means every year over 1.35 million people – the population size of entire countries like Barbados, Estonia and Mauritius – are perishing because of unsafe road conditions. This merits a genuine appetite for and committed undertaking to leave our silos and work together to ensure support is properly channelled to developing countries that need it most. The Fund's global partnership is valuable for this reason because, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries and 5 key areas of road safety support, we are working together to address the global road safety challenge.

For example, the Fund's recently launched [Annual Report](#) highlights that in partnership with the 15 West African ECOWAS member states, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, alongside

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complementary expertise and financing from the UN Road Safety Fund, FIA Foundation, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, the Government of Sweden and the CITA International Motor Vehicle Inspection Committee – targeted support is being channelled to both exporting and importing countries to assure that used vehicles imported into Africa will adhere to consistent minimum standards to facilitate a shift to cleaner and safer used vehicles on the continent. This can yield significant lifesaving and environmentally-beneficial results for the affected 400 million road users in West Africa.

Regulating the export and import of used vehicles in Africa has meant convening exporters – the EU, US and Japan – and African importing countries, to agree on standards for used vehicles. With support from the Fund, the project has raised levels of awareness on the issue of used vehicles at exporters' workshops as well as through an African importers' meeting in 2021. To date, the project has supported ECOWAS' 15 member states to develop harmonized vehicle standard regulations for safer and cleaner used vehicles, which were successfully adopted in 2020. At the national level, The Gambia, Nigeria, Cameroon and Togo are receiving support to align their vehicle standards to the regionally agreed directives. In turn, East Africa is due to adopt regionally harmonized emissions standards in 2022, as a result of support for the project. Plans for the next phase will go to assist importing and exporting countries to harmonize their agreed minimum set of requirements to transfer used vehicles from one country to another.

Allow me to conclude my remarks with, a call for more partners to rally their resources and financing, together, in ways that make road safety present, personal and possible.

Thank you