

Adapted from

UN ESCAP

ROAD SAFETY ACTION PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION

Activities undertaken as part of a road safety action plan or programme can be split into three phases. Each of these is discussed in the following sections.

PHASE 1 ACTIVITIES

Phase 1 activities are undertaken at the earliest stage of safety development. Typically in a country where little safety awareness exists, crash data may or may not be regularly collected. In any case, the data system will need extensive improvement. Not much is known about trends or road users at risk or even the main organisations with road safety responsibilities. General interest by government is usually low and there will be only a few individuals (often medical personnel) who are interested and trying to bring the problem to public attention. There is likely to be no special Police unit to analyse or disseminate crash data. Even if one exists, the data will be little used other than to provide overall statistics for use within the Police Force. Crash data will often be incomplete or grossly inaccurate. There will be few, if any, traffic engineers working in the country and virtually no one working specifically on road safety issues and remedial measures.

Primary Focus/Purpose of Phase 1 Activities

The primary purpose of Phase 1 Activities is to raise awareness amongst decision makers in the country that road safety is a growing and urgent problem. This requires definition of the scale and characteristics of the problem, the bringing together of key parties who may be able to contribute towards solving the problem, and convincing those responsible for resource allocation that sufficient funds should be made available to tackle road safety issues.

Typical Activities to be Undertaken

The main activities which need to be undertaken are as follows:

- Carry out a review of road safety activities and in particular, quantify the scale, nature and characteristics of the problem and identify deficiencies or weaknesses (in terms of road safety) in the sectors and organisations related to road safety.
- Organise a national Road Safety Seminar involving senior personnel from all government and non government agencies with responsibilities or interests in road safety. Each of the main agencies should present a short (10 minute) paper on road safety problems and what needs to be done in their area of responsibility in order to tackle the problem. The one day national seminar should result in agreement amongst the key agencies on the steps and actions to be taken to tackle the problem.

- An interim working group should be established by drawing from senior staff in each of the agencies represented at the seminar. This should function as a coordinating group until a more formal National Road Safety Council (NRSC) can be established.

Resources Required and Timescale Needed for Completion

The time scale needed for completion of this phase can be as little as 2 to 3 months. Technical assistance (of a specialist road safety adviser) may be needed to carry out a critical review of existing road safety and to develop action plans. The National Road Safety Seminar should be organised to take place shortly after completion of the review of road safety so that the results can be presented at the Seminar to all participants. The main agencies with road safety responsibilities or interests should be invited to send a senior representative to the one day seminar. Participants at the seminar should be drawn from both the public sector (Ministries and Government organisations etc.) and the private sector (large commercial companies, the insurance industry, motor manufacturers and/or agents etc.).

PHASE 2 ACTIVITIES

Typical conditions which exist when a country is ready for Phase 2 activities are as follows.

- The Government will have received some technical assistance to review road safety activities and to organise a national road safety seminar.
- The interim road safety working group may already be coordinating activities from time to time and obtaining periodic sponsorship for road safety initiatives, publicity campaigns and materials.
- Individual ministries with road safety responsibilities may be starting to address the problem and beginning to take actions which will improve safety.
- In particular the Ministries which deal with external funding agencies should have taken the opportunity to request assistance from bilateral aid agencies and multilateral development banks to finance some or all of the proposed road safety improvements by the road safety review undertaken under the previous technical assistance project.
- Wherever possible, some funds will have been incorporated into existing and future project loans for implementation of road safety initiatives as part of any downstream action plan.
- Government will be aware of the cost of road crashes to the economy and will be interested in implementing an Action Plan to tackle the problem.
- Various researchers in the universities, medical practitioners and the media may be interested in road safety and keen to see it improved.

The Primary Focus/Purpose of Phase 2

The main purpose of Phase 2 is:

- Develop an overall strategy for the improvement of road safety in the country.
- To identify the most urgent improvements for inclusion within a Priority Action Plan.
- To commence implementation of the Priority Action Plan so that basic systems and procedures can be established to enable more effective activity in road safety.
- To strengthen the key organisations and individuals who need to be involved in the improvement of safety in the long term.

There should be an emphasis during Phase 2 towards strengthening the key organisations, systems and procedures so that once the Priority Action Plan has been implemented, local organisations will be able to tackle the road safety problems of the country more effectively.

Typical Activities to be Undertaken

Typical activities which need to be undertaken include:

Development of a strategy: This requires the development of an overall strategy within which the Priority Action Plan will play a major part. The aim should be that by the end of implementation of the Priority Action Plan the key organisations are in a position to be able to continue tackling road safety issues in the country.

Development of a Prioritised Action Plan: Many important activities in road safety cannot be undertaken effectively until some basic systems are operating to, at least, a minimum level. The main pre-requisites for effective work in road safety in a country are set out below. The first two are the most urgent. Depending on the resources available, other important improvements (such as hazardous location work) can also be included.

i) Crash Data System: A very essential and early priority is establishment of an effective crash data system which allows crash data to be collected nationally, the data to be stored at some central location, data to be analysed and retrieved as needed in order to develop countermeasures and interventions. The analyses and statistics have to be widely disseminated in order to let all other agencies participate fully in tackling the problems of the country.

ii) National Road Safety Council or other Coordinating Mechanism: It is necessary that representatives of the most important organisations with road safety responsibilities meet periodically to discuss and coordinate activities and that such a coordinating mechanism has available to it adequate funding and technical resources to allow decisions to be implemented. This is best done by establishing a National Road Safety Council with its own secretariat and funding.

iii) Demonstration Projects: In each section where improvements are to be carried out the opportunity should be taken to implement “demonstration” projects to provide training to individuals involved in the key agencies and to establish procedures and practices conducive to the improvement of road safety in the country. In the field of road engineering it would be appropriate to improve two or

three hazardous locations and to train the relevant staff in carrying out such investigations, development of countermeasures and implementation of improvements. Development of a Safety Audit System could involve first developing safety audit guidelines for the safety checking of proposed new road schemes and their application on two or three schemes by local traffic engineers (under supervision of a road safety specialist) to gain practical experience in identifying potential safety problems. The development of access and development control guidelines will similarly benefit from, first the development of draft guidelines and then their application on two or three occasions by local traffic engineers (under the supervision of the road safety specialist).

iv) Staff Training and Study Tours: Apart from the opportunities to participate in training via the “demonstration” projects, a small multidisciplinary group of four or five senior individuals (drawn from the government agencies with greatest responsibilities for road safety) should make an overseas trip/study tour to visit countries which have demonstrated particular success in tackling road safety problems. By visiting such countries, discussing safety issues and practices with counterpart experts and physically seeing the facilities and activities being undertaken, it will indicate to what can be accomplished in their own country.

Development of a Five Year Programme: Apart from implementation of the Priority Action Plan and institutional strengthening activities by the specialist safety advisers/consultants, it is necessary for them to develop a five year road safety programme to follow the Action Plan being implemented. The first five year programme should seek to consolidate and improve road safety activities in each of the sectors affecting road safety. It should identify priorities and indicative costs required to make the necessary improvements in each sector. It should package the proposed improvements in such a way as to facilitate funding from external development banks and other aid agencies. It should identify the types of activities and interventions which can be financed through such agencies and those which will have to be funded by the government or organisations in the country concerned.

Resources Required and Time Scale for Completion

Implementation of Priority Action Plans can be undertaken in anything from 12 months to three years depending on the size of the Action Plan, the size of the country and the nature of the problems to be addressed. Generally the intention is to develop the five year programme while implementing the most urgent improvements needed to strengthen the key institutions and agencies. Wherever possible, a time scale of around three years should be allowed for the Action Plan in order to develop and implement all the main improvements needed. External specialist road safety advisory input of anything from 35 to 50 staff months is typically required in implementing such Action Plans. In addition to the technical inputs, financial provision also has to be made for the actual physical cost of the individual interventions implemented as part of the Action Plan. Some of this will be financed by the government itself and other parts might be capable of being financed through aid funded loans

PHASE 3 ACTIVITIES

By this stage the government may have received some technical assistance as part of implementation of a Road Safety Action Plan. An improved crash data system may be in place with suitably trained local staff operating it. Analyses of hazardous locations and characteristics of road user groups most at risk may be being conducted regularly. A National Road Safety Council with several sub committees (providing policy guidance and some financial support to safety committees in municipalities and provinces) may be in existence. Road engineers and highway authorities may be skilled in basic hazardous location improvement work and undertaking improvement programmes on national and provincial roads. Efforts may already be underway via the National Road Safety Council sub-committees to improve driver tests and vehicle inspections, develop childrens' traffic education programmes and develop legislation. There may well be a core of interested professionals specialised in various aspects of safety and keen to tackle the problem but they will probably lack resources to do so. Road safety research may also be underway in several institutions and universities and the media may well be active in beginning to press the government to take action. Countries that have already implemented a Priority Action Plan will have a number of government and non government organisations involved and active in improving safety. Thus creating a conducive atmosphere in which to formulate and implement a series of five year safety programmes.

The Primary Focus/Purpose of Phase 3

The main purpose of Phase 3 is to consolidate the activities initiated during the Priority Action Plan and to develop new activities and interventions which will enable the annual toll of road crash related deaths and injuries to be reduced. The first five year plan should be seen largely as an extension of the activities initiated in the previous Priority Action Plan, but subsequent five year programmes will be building on each previous five year programme. Actual implementation is normally undertaken by way of National Road Safety Plans. These are prepared each year to guide and focus the activities of the various agencies towards achievable targets within the following year but operate within the context of the overall five year programme. By this stage it is necessary for significant investment to be made in road safety activity and most of this will have to be made by the government of the country concerned and not through external aid funding. Normally some items selected from the programme, (for example infrastructure improvements or a one-off road programme of marking/signing improvements on the national network), can be financed by aid projects but in the majority of cases, actual funding will have to be built into the government annual budgeting and five year programmes.

By this stage there should be an appreciation by government of the annual losses to the economy and a willingness to see expenditure on safety as an investment which will, in the longer term, reduce such economic and social losses. Some countries even devote a fixed proportion of annual GDP towards the reduction of road crashes (for example until recently Japan used to devote about 0.6% of its annual GDP towards the improvement of road safety in the knowledge that road crashes were costing the economy around 1.3% of annual GDP, it was investing about half of its estimated annual losses in efforts to try to improve safety).

Monitoring and Evaluation of Road Safety Programmes

As with the earlier Phase 2 Prioritised Action Plans, it is essential that the implementation of road safety programmes is properly monitored to ensure that the activities undertaken

are effective in achieving the objectives and, in the long term, reducing the numbers and severity of road crashes effecting the country. Similar monitoring frameworks can be established to assess whether the overall objectives are being achieved in each sector. In addition to this it, is normal that 5 year action plans specify some quantifiable target reduction in the numbers or rates of casualties or persons killed to provide some quantifiable measure to assess whether the programme has been effective.

Resources Required and Timescale for Completion

As indicated above, the timescale for completion is typically five years and within that, one year road safety plans are normally published as a document which is widely circulated so that all agencies have a clear focus on what needs to be achieved during the forthcoming year. The resources required can vary from anything from US\$ 50 millions up to several hundred million US\$ in order to tackle the problem and to establish the necessary procedures, systems, and practices so that the safety problem can be reduced.

A particular problem for developing countries entering the high growth phase of motorisation is that road crashes and deaths will increase broadly in line with numbers of vehicles and vehicle usage. Very rapid increases in vehicles will therefore result in increased deaths. This makes it very difficult to establish politically acceptable targets. In such circumstances, it is not possible to say that road deaths will drop by x% within five years as the numbers of deaths will almost certainly increase over that period (because of the rapid increases in motorisation). It may thus be better to talk in terms of “lives saved” by each countermeasure. Thus one can legitimately say “y” lives were saved as a result of particular interventions (even though the actual number of deaths may have increased). This is likely to be more politically acceptable as a target.

More information on road safety action plans and programmes can be obtained from:

Transport, Tourism and Communication Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
The United Nations Building
Rajadamnern Avenue
Bangkok, 10200
Thailand