



GRSP FOCUS

Road safety education in schools:
saving young lives and limbs



Saving young lives and limbs

Road accidents are a major and growing cause of death and injury to children in developing and transition countries. Typically, twice as many pedestrians are killed in road accidents in these countries compared with European countries and USA and a high proportion of these accidents involve children of school age.

One reason why these accidents happen is that children do not have the necessary knowledge and skills that allow them to deal with the hostile traffic environment. Receiving road safety education as part of their normal school curriculum is recognized as being one of the most effective ways of providing children with this type of knowledge.

Therefore road safety education deserves to be given much more of a priority in developing and transition countries. Importantly, research has demonstrated that it can be highly effective when some principles of good practice are followed. However, to produce best results, the program should be supported by other road safety measures: driver training, providing safe crossing places and enforcing safe driver behavior.

Introduction

Road safety education involves teaching children to be safer road users.

It does so by developing:

- Knowledge and understanding of road traffic
- Behavioral skills necessary to survive in the presence of road traffic
- An understanding of their own responsibilities for keeping themselves safe
- Knowledge of the causes and consequences of road accidents
- A responsible attitude to their own safety and to the safety of others

Institutional arrangements

Road safety education is best promoted through national programs which are implemented at the local level. Key elements include:

- A **coordinating body**, made up of people representing education, police, health services, roads and transport policy, given responsibility for developing the program and monitoring
- A long-term **implementation plan** involving education authorities, teacher trainers and teachers, police, health workers, parents and community activists
- The need for a well-informed and respected **champion** to animate the program
- Preparation of a **program** adapted to the psychological development of children which can be delivered within a recognized school curriculum
- Ongoing **monitoring and evaluation** to identify lessons learned



Key design elements

- A road safety education program should begin at the pre-school level and educate continuously throughout the child's school life.
- Base the education on **practical training** in a realistic road environment
- Use teaching methods which follow the **principles of child development** - for example, under 6 years of age children cannot put themselves in someone else's position and under 11 they find it difficult to only focus on what is relevant
- Training needs to be **regular, frequent** and must be **combined with practice**
- It should be **tailored** to take account of education, cultural, transport and financial circumstances
- Road safety education should have a formal place in the school curriculum
- Ideally, schools programs should be reinforced by community safety schemes

Financing and sponsoring

These programs are typically financed in one or more of the following ways:

- Education department budget. The usual method of finance, sometimes with voluntary support from the police
- National Road Safety Council (or equivalent). Provided they have the required resources, or can access them under donor supported road safety programs
- Corporate business, motor

manufacturers, oil companies and suppliers of road safety equipment are an important and growing source of finance, even in industrialized countries

Cost effectiveness

There are few well-designed research studies on the cost effectiveness of road safety education - especially in developing countries. Programs are typically introduced in response to high accident numbers and are evaluated by monitoring the children's behavior, knowledge and attitudes. Detailed information on the cost and number of accidents is often lacking; as is the cost of introducing road safety education into the school curriculum. However, it has been estimated that:

- Introducing 'Traffic Clubs' in the UK (for parents of pre-school children aged between 3 and 5) UK would produce an overall saving of \$0.75m per annum
- Introduction of the "Let's Decide - Walk Wise" resource into one region of the UK (developed for school children aged 5 to 8) was accompanied by a 36 per cent reduction in target group casualties.

There are thus both economic and social reasons for promoting road safety education in schools.

Suggested curriculum

Age 0-4

Children this age are too young to be responsible for their own safety.

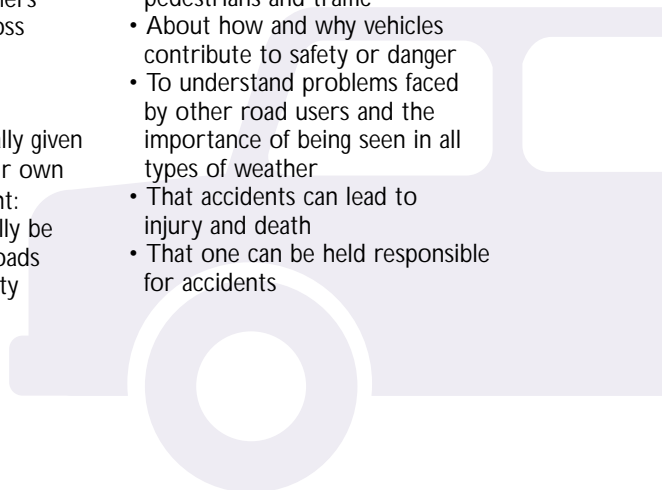
They should be taught to:

- Hold hands with older children or adults near the road
- Walk only on footpaths, or at the edge of the road
- Play in safe places (away from roads) designated by an adult
- Develop a simple road safety vocabulary
- Recognize roads are primarily for traffic, not for people
- Recognize roads are dangerous
- Know you have to stop, look and listen before walking across the road
- Know that small children cannot always be seen by motorists
- Know traffic may come from unexpected places
- Learn to use protected crossings, before learning to use others
- Know safest places to cross the road near home
- To recognise and seek people who are there to help them cross the road
- How and where to play safely
- The direction of traffic by sight and sound
- Where to stop, look and listen before crossing and to choose the shortest distance to walk directly across
- That, whenever possible to, use marked pedestrian crossings
- To understand and use traffic lights (with or without marked pedestrian crossings)
- How to get to and from school safely
- About the dangers of not being seen, or not being able to see other traffic because of stationary vehicles
- To develop further understanding of rules governing the behavior of pedestrians and traffic
- About how and why vehicles contribute to safety or danger
- To understand problems faced by other road users and the importance of being seen in all types of weather
- That accidents can lead to injury and death
- That one can be held responsible for accidents

Age 5-7

Children this age are typically given more responsibility for their own safety. They should be taught:

- That children should ideally be accompanied near busy roads
- To extend their road safety vocabulary





Age 8-12

Children this age are often expected to deal with traffic risk by themselves. They should learn to:

- Identify and recommend to smaller children safe places to play
- Understand the need to be seen near and in traffic and judge the hazards of stationary vehicles and how to play or cross the road near them
- Understand traffic lights, road signs, road markings and signals given by drivers and the police
- Understand the concept of differing speeds by observing traffic
- Know when and how to summon help in an emergency
- Understand which road signs must be obeyed, which are warnings and which provide information
- Understand about visibility, conspicuity, adverse weather, vehicle control and braking
- Be made aware that traffic rules are not always observed by other road users
- Understand needs of special groups - the very young, the old and disabled
- Understand problems of alcohol, drugs and fatigue in relation to road accidents

- Understand immediate and long term consequences of road accidents
- Be aware of importance of planning safe school routes when changing schools
- Understand problems caused by domestic and wild animals near roads
- Set a good example to other children

Age 12-16+

Over the age of 12, children in developing and transitional countries are more likely to be treated as 'mini' adults and should learn to:

- Travel safely on public transport by themselves
- Ride a bicycle on the road
- Know the contents of the highway code (if there is one)
- Identify and understand causes of road accidents and how to reduce risks
- Observe traffic and be able to judge speeds and distances
- Learn the basic legal requirements of road user responsibilities towards fellow road users
- Know about simple first aid

Emerging good practice

Ghana 'Safe Ways' Program

This resource provides opportunities for 11 to 12-year-old primary school children to learn about road safety in the classroom, playground and outside near real roads to facilitate safer journeys to and from school.

Nepal Road Safety Education Program

This was developed for areas with high illiteracy rates and uses a puppet show to illustrate the dangers associated with running into the road. This is followed by a discussion session and a demonstration near the roadside, or in the school grounds.

Papua New Guinea "Smart Smart" Road Safety Book

Presents a variety of road safety messages to school children in appealing and exciting ways.

India 'Safe Feet' Program

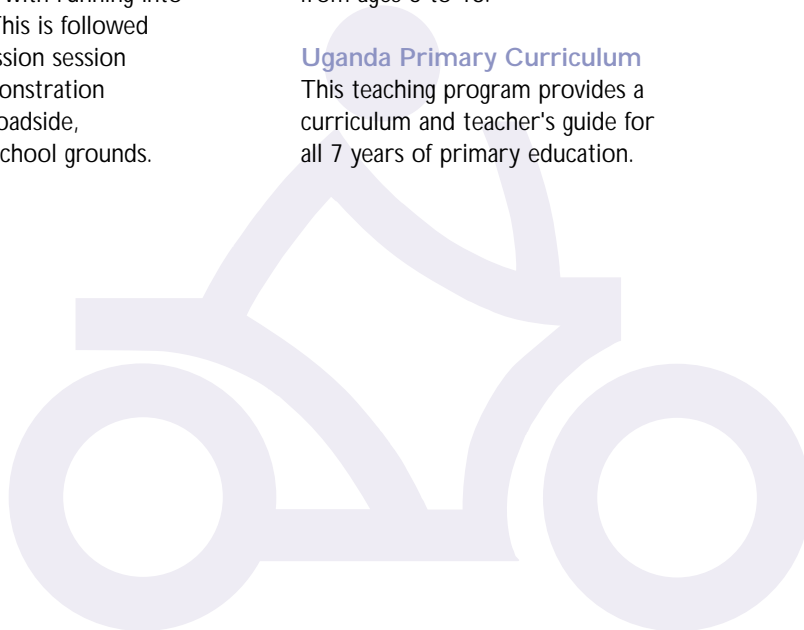
This resource provides a teacher resource aimed at children aged 6 - 7 just starting at primary school.

South Africa Road Safety Education Package

This package is being designed by GRSP South Africa to assist school teachers to create awareness and safe behavior of children in traffic from ages 6 to 18.

Uganda Primary Curriculum

This teaching program provides a curriculum and teacher's guide for all 7 years of primary education.





Find out more

Most of the material included in this leaflet was sourced from the Transport Research Laboratory's (TRL) Overseas Road Note 17 (1997): Road Safety Education in Developing Countries: Guidelines for Good Practice in Primary Schools.

Other useful sources are:

- Asian Development Bank (1999). Road Safety Education of Children, Report 4.6 of Road Safety Guidelines for the Asian and Pacific Region. Manila, Philippines
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- Sayer IA, A Quimby, G Murray and J Guy (2000). Improving Road Safety Education (RSE) in Developing Countries: India. TRL 442. Crowthorne, England, UK



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