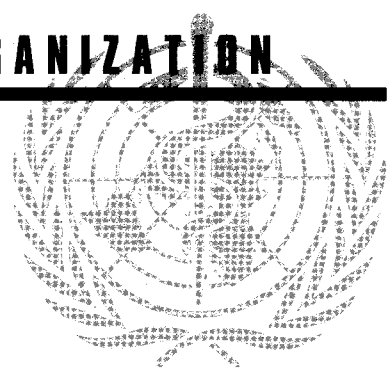




WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

PRESS



WEBSITE

www.who.int

1211 GENEVA 27 SWITZERLAND - TELEPHONE: (41) 22.791.21.11 - FAX: (41) 22.791.31.11 - E-MAIL: inf@who.int

**News Release WHO/49
16 September 2007**

BLOOMBERG FAMILY FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTES US\$ 9 MILLION TO WHO TO SUPPORT LIFE-SAVING ROAD SAFETY PROGRAMME

GENEVA - The World Health Organization (WHO) today announced a US\$ 9 million contribution from the Bloomberg Family Foundation to support an important new effort to pilot policies and programmes to prevent the needless loss of life on the world's roads. Demonstration projects in Mexico and Viet Nam will help significantly decrease the death, injury and disability resulting from road traffic crashes - an area of public health which has been underfunded in the past.

Road traffic crashes kill nearly 1.2 million people annually and injure up to 50 million more, with the majority of deaths and injuries occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Road traffic crashes are the leading cause of death globally for 10-to-24 year-olds. Most of these young lives are lost while walking, riding on their bicycles or motorcycles, or using public transport.

In addition to the human suffering they cause, road traffic crashes place a huge burden on national economies; their cost in low- and middle-income countries amounts to more than the annual development assistance the countries receive. Unless action is taken, the number of road traffic injuries and deaths is likely to get worse in most regions of the world as motorization increases; road traffic injuries are predicted to be the eighth leading cause of death by 2030.

The new initiative for road traffic injury prevention will provide US\$ 9 million to WHO over the next two years to implement some of the practical measures that have resulted in a sharp decline in road traffic deaths and injuries in many countries. Prevention programmes will be piloted in Mexico and Viet Nam, with a focus on increasing the use of motorcycle helmets, seat-belts and child restraints; reducing drink-driving; and improving the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

Strategies used will include building capacity for law-makers and public health officials, training the police to improve enforcement of legislation and supporting nongovernmental organizations in their prevention work. There will be a focus on increasing public awareness of road traffic injuries and their prevention, as well as on providing incentives to encourage the use of protective measures, such as helmets and child restraints.

WHO PRESS OFFICE

Implementing such broad-based road safety initiatives in these two countries has the potential to save many lives: in addition, by working in two pilot countries to test the effects of intensive road safety programmes, there are likely to be spill-over effects with an impact on other countries facing similar road safety concerns in the two regions.

The new funding also provides support for a global road safety report describing on a country-by-country basis the situation based on a standard list of items, such as crash incidence; existence of legislation on seat-belts, motorcycle helmets, speed and blood alcohol concentration; seat-belt and motorcycle helmet-wearing rates; and the existence of a national plan of action on road safety. Data will be collected in countries through governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations and academic institutions. The report will serve as a useful tool in advocating for increased focus and investment on road safety at both national and international levels.

WHO acknowledges with thanks the importance of this gift from the Bloomberg Family Foundation and the potential of the planned initiative to save lives. With this support, WHO is enabled to accelerate its assistance to countries to enhance their road safety work, in particular to implement the recommendations of the 2004 *World report on road traffic injury prevention*.

RELATED LINKS

WHO road traffic injuries http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_traffic/en/

World report on road traffic injury prevention
http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/infomaterials/world_report/en

For more information, please contact:

Laura Sminkey, Communications Officer, WHO, Geneva, Tel: +41 22 791 4547, Mobile: +41 79 249 3520, E-mail: sminkeyl@who.int.

All press releases, fact sheets and other WHO media material may be found at: www.who.int