

# The Role Of Speed Control In Prevention Of Road Traffic Crashes: Experience From Kenya

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

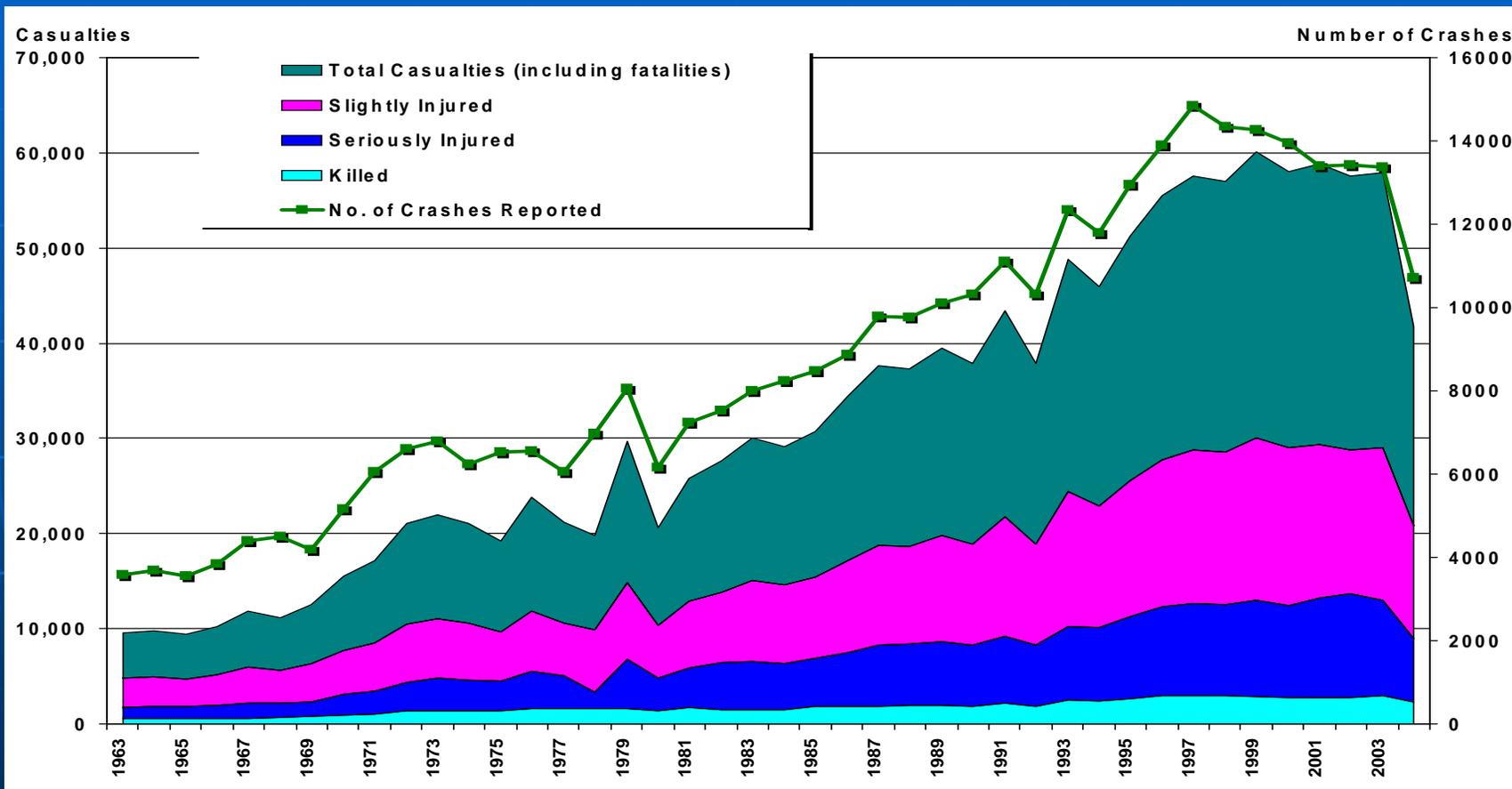
Road crashes have been identified as a serious problem in Kenya, with severe economic, societal, and personal costs.

The government and public have recognized the problem – injuries, deaths, esp. affecting the most productive section of the population.

WHO (2004) quotes Kenya's president Kibaki:

“Over 3000 Kenyans are killed in our roads every year, most of them between the ages of 15 and 44 years. The cost to our economy from these accidents is in excess of US\$50 million exclusive of the actual loss of life. The Kenyan government appreciates that the road traffic injuries are a major public health problem amenable to prevention”

# Figure 1: Road crash and casualty pattern in Kenya



## 2.0. THE ROLE OF SPEED CONTROL

For a long time it has been recognized that excessive speeding is the single most widely blamed cause of accidents (O'flaherty, 1983).

“Excessive speeding” in this context refers to the situation where motorist travels at a speed greater than what the traffic and roadway conditions can safely allow

Speed control and management, therefore, has been identified as the single most important or central measure to road safety.

Speed control and management, not only prevent road crashes, but also minimize injuries associated with the crashes that take place. (Finch et al, 1994).

### 3.0 KENYA'S EXPERIENCE

Police records, interviews with survivors of road crashes and interviews with eye-witnesses show that almost all injury and fatal accidents are linked to excessive speeding.

Knowledge that excessive speeding is the main cause of accidents made the previous government to attempt introduction of speed governors in PSVs operated and managed by private sector.

Such Government/Presidential orders were given only after grisly road traffic crashes and public outcry; they were soon forgotten and measures stopped.

Implementation never even once succeeded due to threats by the PSV operators to withdraw their services to the public.

Enforcement of the existing law on speed limits has also not been effective.

Research carried out in Kenya [Abiero- Gariy, 1989] sought to determine the perception or opinion of the public on the real causes of road traffic crashes.

The survey results are given in table 2; Showing top priority areas that need to be addressed.

Table 1: public perception of the real causes of crashes

Causal Factor	Number of respondents	%
Poor road conditions	95	4.0
Limited cycle paths/ crossings	94	4.0
Poor/inadequate/missing road signs	114	4.8
Limited pedestrian facilities	111	4.6
Poor/insufficient road network (gaps)	39	1.6
<b>Lack/ineffective enforcement of speed</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>13.8</b>
Junction bottlenecks	193	8.0
Ineffective parking enforcement/obstruction	129	5.4
<b>Insufficient traffic calming (in built-up areas)</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>14.6</b>
<b>Excessive speeding/No measures to slow vehicles</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>31.5</b>
Careless driving/poor training	14	0.6
Defective vehicles	20	0.8
Drunk driving	8	0.3
Failure to comply with traffic signs	151	6.3
	2400	100

## 4.0 INTERVENTION MEASURES

Several studies have clearly **identified** excessive speed as the biggest single factor in road traffic crashes, responsible for property damage, injuries and deaths in Kenya\*

In 1979, under the Kenya – Finland cooperation, road safety programme was initiated resulting in the formation of Road Safety Unit in Min. of Transport and communications. The unit was the secretariat to the National Road Safety Council (NRSC)

The NRSC has been largely ineffective, moribund, and was to be re-launched .

\*[e.g. Abiero–Gariy,1989; Abiero–Gariy, 1991, Agoki et al, 1993;Government of Kenya (GOK) Economic survey (various issues); GOK statistical Abstract (various issues); GOK, 2004; Miyanji,1997, Nantulya,1999;etc]

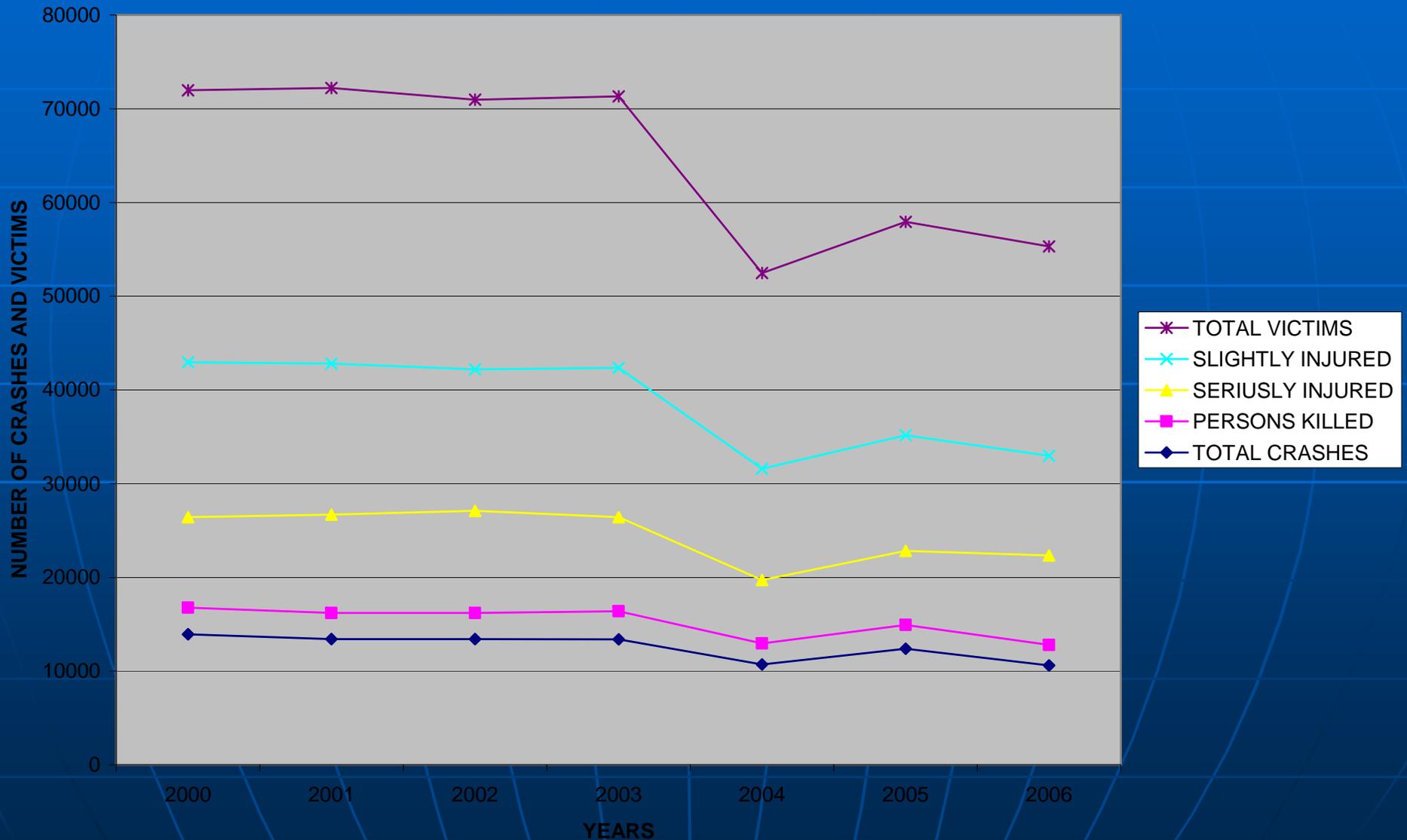
- In 2003, the new government initiated road traffic safety reforms through Legal notice No161 of October 2003; with the following measures:
  - Speed governors for commercial and PSV
  - Speed limit enforcement
  - Enforcement of seatbelt regulations/ rules
  - Enforcement of traffic laws/regulations [ e.g. complying with traffic signs, vehicle inspections, no over-loading, etc]
- These measures were chosen as they expected to be effective in addressing the problem at minimum costs. They make use of the instruments that are already available.

## RESULTS OF THE MEASURES

\*Given in table 3 and figure 2; showing changes /reduction in crashes over the period that the implementation/enforcement was effective

# Fig.2: Results of the countermeasures

## RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTED CRASH COUNTERMEASURES



The results show that over the period of effective implementation:

There has been appreciable reduction in crashes over the period despite partial implementation [of speed governors on commercial and public service vehicles only]

There has been appreciable reduction in the number of casualties.

# Challenges

- Lack of effective public education that is extremely necessary in addressing this endemic problem of speed.
- Problems associated with the introduction of speed limiters; manipulation, costs, etc and effective surveillance and enforcement
- Political will is sometimes lacking.

# Challenges 2

- Weak institutional and legal arrangements that deny the initiative the necessary continuity.
- Sometimes there is a multiplicity of institutions
- Inconsistent implementation of policies inadequate funding for research, monitoring, implementation and interventions.
- Inadequate capacity
- Ineffective public education strategy

# Conclusion

- Given the role speed plays in road traffic crashes, **speed control and management** if properly and consistently employed with proper **legal, institutional, and financial backing**, the problem of crashes would be more than 80% solved