

Helmets

A ROAD SAFETY MANUAL
FOR DECISION-MAKERS
AND PRACTITIONERS

Helmet

A road safety manual for
decision-makers and
practitioners



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Table of contents

Preface	vii
Contributors and acknowledgements	ix
Executive summary	xi
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Introduction	xiii
Background to the series of manuals	xiii
Background to the helmet manual	xv
<hr/>	
1. Why are helmets needed?	1
1.1 Many people around the world die in motorcycle collisions	3
1.1.1 Head injuries are a leading cause of death and disability	4
1.2 A helmet protects your head	7
1.2.1 The mechanism of head injuries	7
1.2.2 How a helmet works	9
1.2.3 Motorcycle helmet design	11
1.3 Helmet use is effective at reducing head injuries	14
1.4 Helmet programmes are effective at getting helmets on heads	18
Summary	22
References	23
<hr/>	
2. How to assess the situation in your country	25
2.1 Why do you need to assess the situation?	27
2.1.1 The quality of the data	28
2.2 How widespread is the problem of non-use of helmets?	29
2.2.1 How big is the motorcycle injury problem?	29

2.2.2	What is the helmet-wearing rate in the area being considered?	35
2.2.3	Why don't people wear helmets?	41
2.3	How to assess what is already in place	44
2.3.1	Who is in charge of road safety, and what funds are there for it?	45
2.3.2	Who are the stakeholders?	45
2.3.3	Is there a helmet use law in place?	47
2.3.4	Is there a helmet standard in place?	47
2.3.5	Have any helmet programmes been attempted so far?	48
2.3.6	Using the situational assessment to prioritise actions	51
	Summary	51
	References	52
<hr/>		
3.	How to design and implement a helmet programme	53
3.1	Establishing a working group	57
3.1.1	Who to involve?	57
3.1.2	Assigning roles to working group members	59
3.2	How to prepare a plan of action	61
3.2.1	Setting the programme's objectives	61
3.2.2	Setting targets	63
3.2.3	Setting performance indicators	66
3.2.4	Deciding on activities	68
3.2.5	Setting a timeframe	69
3.2.6	Estimating resource needs	69
3.2.7	Setting up a monitoring mechanism	71
3.2.8	Ensuring sustainability of the programme	72
3.3	How to develop and implement a helmet law	75
3.3.1	Developing the law	75
3.3.2	Introducing and implementing legislation	77
3.3.3	Developing a timeframe for implementation of a law	82
3.4	How to design and implement a helmet standard	83
3.4.1	Adopting a standard	83
3.4.2	Key considerations when setting standards	85
3.4.3	General specifications for helmets	87
3.5	How to improve compliance with the law	93
3.5.1	Voluntary measures to increase helmet use	94

3.5.2 Compulsory measures to increase helmet use	96
3.6 How to involve the public	103
3.6.1 Selecting an agency for the campaign	103
3.6.2 Objectives of the campaign	103
3.6.3 Changing knowledge and attitudes on helmet use	104
3.6.4 Working with the media	104
3.6.5 Creating campaign messages	106
3.6.6 Setting a campaign schedule	107
3.6.7 Carrying out and evaluating the campaign	108
3.7 Educating young people	111
3.8 Ensuring an appropriate medical response	115
Summary	119
References	122
<hr/>	
4. How to evaluate the programme	123
4.1 Planning the evaluation	125
4.1.1 Aims of evaluation	126
4.1.2 Types of evaluation	126
4.2 Choosing the evaluation methods	127
4.2.1 Study types for formative and process evaluations	128
4.2.2 Study types for impact and outcome evaluations	128
4.2.3 Choosing the performance indicators	132
4.2.4 Conducting an economic evaluation of a programme	133
4.2.5 Determining sample size	135
4.3 Dissemination and feedback	136
Summary	138
References	138
<hr/>	
Glossary of terms	141
Partner organizations in the development of the manual	145

Preface

Road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and a leading cause of death and injury around the world. Each year nearly 1.2 million people die and millions more are injured or disabled as a result of road crashes, mostly in low-income and middle-income countries. As well as creating enormous social costs for individuals, families and communities, road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on health services and economies. The cost to countries, possibly already struggling with other development concerns, may well be 1%–2% of their gross national product. As motorization increases, road traffic crashes are becoming a fast-growing problem, particularly in developing countries. If present trends continue unchecked, road traffic injuries will increase dramatically in most parts of the world over the next two decades, with the greatest impact falling on the most vulnerable citizens.

Appropriate and targeted action is needed most urgently. The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, launched jointly in 2004 by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, identified improvements in road safety management together with specific actions that have led to dramatic decreases in road traffic deaths and injuries in industrialized countries that have been active in road safety. The use of seat-belts, helmets and child restraints, the report showed, have saved thousands of lives. The introduction of speed limits, the creation of safer infrastructure, the enforcement of blood alcohol content limits and improvements in vehicle safety, are all interventions that have been tested and repeatedly shown to be effective.

The international community must now take the lead encouraging good practice in road safety management and the take up of these interventions in other countries, in ways appropriate to their particular settings. To speed up such efforts, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on 14 April 2004 urging greater attention and resources to be directed towards the global road safety crisis. Resolution 58/289 on “Improving global road safety” stressed the importance of international collaboration in the field of road safety. A further resolution (A58/L.60), passed in October 2005, reaffirmed the United Nation’s commitment to this issue, encouraging Member States to implement the recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, and commending collaborative road safety initiatives so far undertaken towards implementing resolution 58/289. In particular, it encouraged Member States to focus on addressing key risk factors, and to establish lead agencies for road safety.

To contribute to the implementation of these resolutions, the World Health Organization, the Global Road Safety Partnership, the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, and the World Bank, have collaborated to produce a series of manuals aimed at policy-makers and practitioners. This manual is one of them. Each provides

step-by-step guidance to countries wishing to improve road safety organisation and to implement the specific road safety interventions outlined in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. They propose simple, effective and cost-effective solutions that can save many lives and reduce the shocking burden of road traffic crashes around the world. We would encourage all to use these manuals.

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Executive summary

Along with a global increase in motorization, particularly in low-income and middle-income countries, the use of motorized two-wheelers and bicycles is growing rapidly in many places. As a result, there are increasing fatalities and injuries among users of two-wheelers, with head injuries being a major concern. Motorcycle and bicycle helmets are effective both in preventing head injuries and in reducing the severity of injuries sustained by riders and passengers of two-wheelers.

Unfortunately, in many countries the use of helmets is low. The *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* described how wearing helmets would save many lives. Consequently, the Report recommended that countries set and enforce helmet laws for drivers and passengers of both motorized two-wheelers and bicycles.

The purpose of this manual is to provide advice on how to increase the use of helmets within a country. The manual is aimed at policy-makers and road safety practitioners and draws on experience from countries that have succeeded in achieving and sustaining high levels of helmet use. It provides the necessary evidence that will be needed to start a helmet use programme, and takes the user through the steps needed to assess the helmet situation in a country. It then explains the steps needed to design and implement a helmet use programme, including: setting up a working group; developing an action plan; introducing and enforcing mandatory helmet laws; creating appropriate standards for helmet production; effectively marketing helmets to the public; educating children and young people on helmet use; and consideration of the capacity for an appropriate medical response to be provided following a crash. Finally, the last section in the manual guides the user on planning and implementing an evaluation of the programme, such that results are fed back into programme design. For each of these activities, the document outlines in a practical way the various steps that need to be taken.

In developing the material for this manual, the writers have drawn on case studies from around the world to illustrate examples of “good practice”. Although the manual is aimed at countries with low use of helmets, the modular structure of the manual means it can be used in countries with very different levels of helmet use. The focus of the manual is on motorcycle helmets, although examples that pertain to bicycle helmet use are also addressed.