WHO UPDATE.....

Road traffic injury prevention receives boost from Bloomberg Family Foundation

Road traffic injury prevention has long been neglected by most major donors to public health. This has changed recently. The field has received a considerable financial boost with the donation of a US\$9 million grant from the Bloomberg Family Foundation to WHO. The grant tasks WHO with a 2-year road safety project that comprises two components: (a) a global road safety status report to monitor progress in individual countries worldwide; (b) country pilot projects to demonstrate what can be achieved through intensified efforts around select strategies.

GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY STATUS REPORT

The report aims to assess the status of road safety in all WHO's Member States using comparable methodology and measures, in order for countries to assess their status vis-à-vis others, understand the gaps in road safety, and identify key priorities for intervention. The methodology of the report is being developed through wide consultation. The report will include: information on the indicators described in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*: the existence of multi-sectoral involvement in national road safety planning and implementation; data on road traffic fatalities and non-fatal injuries; and the implementation of measures known to reduce the likelihood and severity of road traffic injuries (reducing speed and drink-driving; increasing use of helmets, seat belts, and child restraints; improving conspicuity of vulnerable road users; and addressing issues related to vehicle and road design). Information on such measures would reflect rates of use of helmets

and seat belts and the existence and enforcement of legislation. The data will be collected from all Member States through WHO country offices and partner organizations, and presented in the form of a global status report, along similar lines to the *Global tuberculosis control report*. The report will be translated into the six UN languages and will be widely disseminated and freely available on the web.

COUNTRY PILOT PROJECTS

In Mexico and Viet Nam, efforts will be made to increase the use of motorcycle helmets, seat belts, and child restraints, reduce drink-driving, and improve the visibility of vulnerable road users. Strategies used will include building capacity for law-makers and public health officials, training the police to improve enforcement of legislation, and supporting non-governmental 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. Critical to the country projects is the need for national ownership and multi-sectoral partnership. 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 concentrated road safety programs, the impact of interventions can be documented. There are likely to be spill-over effects with an impact on other countries facing similar road safety concerns.

This grant is noteworthy to the field in at least three major ways. Firstly, the

contribution from the Bloomberg Family Foundation is one of the most significant ever made to global road traffic injury prevention. It was granted following an analysis by the Foundation which identified public health issues that impact heavily on the global burden of disease and injury and which are amenable to effective intervention, but which are markedly underfunded. Injury prevention and tobacco control ranked the highest in this analysis. It can only be hoped that other donors will make similar analyses and draw similar conclusions. Secondly, the field has been lacking a tool for following progress at country level. Programs in other fields such as tuberculosis have had such tools for several years. It is hoped that the *Global road safety status report* will be issued on a regular basis, and thereby become the global tool for monitoring and stimulating progress over time. Thirdly, the grant also seeks to address the current lack of evaluated large-scale interventions in low- and middle-income countries. These country pilot projects should provide us with useful lessons for road traffic injury prevention efforts in other countries. Together these initiatives should save lives and contribute to countries' willingness and ability to address road crashes as a leading cause of death, injury, and disability.

For further information, please contact Dr Margie Peden (pedenm@who.int), email traffic@who.int or visit http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention.

T Toroyan
WHO Department of Injuries and Violence
Prevention, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27,
Switzerland; toroyant@who.int

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