

Transforming road safety in Asia Non-governmental Organizations contributing to effective change

Lotte Brondum and Patrick Kinyanjui, Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety

ABSTRACT

Each year, more than 1.35 million people die and many more suffer injuries due to road crashes. Furthermore, road crashes cause low- and middle-income countries to lose between 3 percent -5 percent of their GDP. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a key role in advocating for and implementing evidence-based programs that reduce crashes and assist the injured. The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety (the Alliance) is a member organization that represents 225 NGOs around the world including 36 in Asia. Capacity building for these NGOs is one of the Alliance's three key areas of work, with the aim of equipping grassroots organizations and strengthening the quality and evidence-base of their work. This article highlights how capacity building has positioned road safety NGOs in Asia as key partners in driving the road safety agenda, and produced positive results at local, national, and regional levels. It discusses the value of data collection training, shares NGOs' best practices, and includes other activities that are contributing to the attainment of SDG road safety specific targets.

Key words: NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations), Capacity building, Road safety, Alliance Advocates, Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) Decade of Action (DOA)

1. Introduction

This paper will focus on the key outcomes of the Alliance Empowerment Program, a capacity-building initiative that builds on the skills and experience of member NGOs enabling them to be more effective advocates for road safety. Learning needs assessment carried out early in the program identified that NGOs could be more effective if they were better equipped to collect, analyse, and present data for advocacy. Recent training projects in Africa and Asia took delegates through the advocacy process using a safe school zone demonstration project that they then replicated in their own contexts, leading to quick wins and demonstrating what can be achieved when NGOs base their work on data and evidence.

2. Alliance Empowerment Program

The Alliance Empowerment Program incorporates face-to-face and online training, mentoring, and small grant schemes. It aims to improve the ability of NGOs working in road safety around the world to design and implement initiatives that significantly reduce the risk of injury and fatality on the world's roads. The Alliance Empowerment Program uses in-house resources and partners with global road safety experts, to build our Alliance members NGOs' skills. Members learn to undertake evidence-based activities that have been identified by the global road safety community as critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets relating to road safety.

Alliance Advocate training, an intense, face-to-face training that targets NGO leaders to speed up advocacy in road safety at both local and national level.

Since its launch in 2016, the Alliance Advocate training and mentorship have produced 70 Alliance Advocates globally, 25 of whom are from Asia. In the three years of implementation, the program has produced three main outcomes:

- Improved access to key decision makers and influencers in governments leading to formalization and re-enactment and enforcement of road safety laws.

- Unprecedented access to grassroots communities, and increased mobilization through coalitions and focused campaigns.
- Increased media engagement.

The Alliance's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is used to continuously learn and improve the planning and delivery of the program, as well as evaluating the performance of member NGOs that have benefited from the program. Through gathering lessons learned, best practice training models can be developed.

3. Burden of road traffic deaths and injuries in Asia

According to the World Health Organization's Global Status Report on Road Safety, Asia has the second highest rate of road traffic injuries and fatalities in the world after Africa¹. There are 20.7 deaths per 100,000 populations in Asia. Vulnerable populations, such as pedestrians and motorists on two-wheelers are disproportionately affected. Reducing the number of road traffic injuries in developing countries not only increases income growth, but also and generates substantial welfare benefits to societies.

Road safety directly mentioned in two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 3.6 (Good Health and Wellbeing): By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. (The timeline for this target was aligned to the UN Global Plan for Road Safety². A new target is expected to be negotiated with a 2030 timeline.)
- SDG 11.2 (Sustainable Cities and Communities): By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Also of relevance to road safety in an occupational setting, is:

- SDG 8.8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Protect labour rights and promote safe working environments

It should be noted that SDG 3.6 target to halve road deaths and injuries, went significantly further than the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 (DOA)³ target that it was based on, which was just "to stabilize and then reduce" road traffic fatalities. SDG 3.6 is, therefore, the strongest commitment that the United Nations (UN) Member States have ever made to road injury prevention. The aim to halve road deaths is also closely aligned with some other existing DOA targets, such as those set by the African Union, the Association of Asian Nations and the European Union.

In Asian countries in general, it has been estimated that for one road traffic death, there are 20 hospitalizations, 50 emergency room visits, and more than 100 minor injuries⁴. Added to this the social impact: pain, grief and suffering, loss of education, work, and damaged relationships, road traffic injuries impose a very large economic burden on the countries affected. Given the gross estimate of 1 percent of GDP in economic loss from road traffic injuries in South Asian countries estimated by the World Bank, this translates to around US\$25 billion a year, which is more than 50 percent of the total annual amount allocated to development assistance worldwide.⁵ The main reason why the burden of road traffic injuries in

¹ https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2018/en/

² https://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/en/

³ https://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/en/

⁴ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(17\)30276-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(17)30276-1/fulltext)

⁵ https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/global-road-safety-facility/publication/the-high-toll-of-traffic-injuries-unacceptable-and-preventableDecade_of_Action_-_NGOs_Perspectives

this region is so high, can be linked to growth in the number of motor vehicles, poor enforcement of traffic safety regulations, poor quality of roads and vehicles, and inadequate public health infrastructures. Collaborative advocacy action by road safety NGOs can contribute significantly to reducing this high burden.

4. Roles played by NGOs in Asia

The DOA for road safety has facilitated the work of NGOs in many ways. It has provided a clear framework for raising awareness on road safety issues, and it has created a platform for discussion and consultation among all stakeholders. For the first time, it has introduced an important reference mechanism that can be used in the dialogue with governments.

Like NGOs in other regions, many NGOs in Asia began their work as downstream implementer of services, e.g. school trainings, but have shifted their focus to upstream policy work in order to influence national strategies and advocate for legislative changes. They have used the DOA to hold their governments accountable to the commitments within it and to ensure that international obligations are met, thereby trying to influence road safety policy. As part of civil society, these NGOs have played the 'watchdog' role. Where, previously, many NGOs have been branded by the perception that they were anti-government, slowly the view of what NGOs are and do has been transformed presenting them as having a more balanced, dual role of monitor/enforcer and partner, leading to greater trust with their governments. As the DOA comes to a close, NGOs in Asia are increasingly playing a vital role in advancing the road safety agenda in the context of the DOA and beyond. Their credibility has continued to grow and their ability to establish trust and respect with government partners is expected to strengthen.

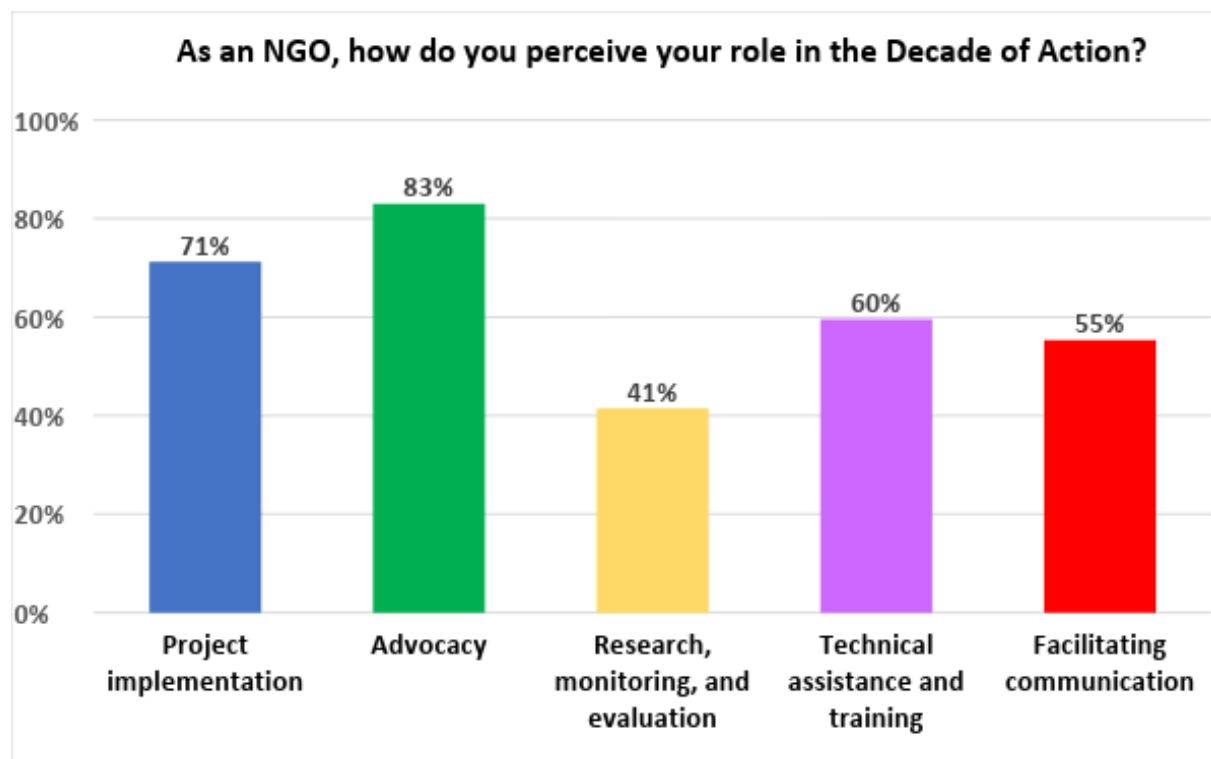
NGOs have focused heavily on nurturing partnerships with their governments; especially in those countries where governments are seen to be leading on road safety issues (e.g. where a national plan has been put in place). In these situations, the role of the NGOs has been to support the government to implement the national plan. Many NGOs are also making genuine attempts to forge partnerships with key stakeholders both inside and outside the NGO world. In doing so, their actions echo a key principle underlying the SDGs: that no single actor can achieve the SDGs on their own and acknowledging SDG 17, which addresses partnerships.

In many countries in Asia, road safety is being addressed strategically at a national level (Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, India, and Viet Nam). However, at local level in many places, where the challenges are often exacerbated by lack of road safety knowledge and weak enforcement of existing laws, limited investment is being made. NGOs are bridging this gap between the national and local levels, as many of them are already present at the local level where communities are sometimes hard to reach.

Cognizant to the fact that the lack of reliable government data influences the effectiveness of their activities, NGOs have embarked on collecting primary data themselves on many key road safety indicators. Their efforts can be valuable in monitoring national and local road safety initiatives. This local data is a valuable supplement to the more readily available global data such as the WHO monitoring reports. Some NGOs in Asia have begun using this locally-collected data to hold their governments accountable for their global commitments, including the 12 Voluntary Global Road Safety Performance Targets⁶ and the implementation of national plans. NGOs are also advocating for their governments to commit the resources needed to build the institutional support and technical skills and ensure that reliable data is the basis for road safety planning and results.

In 2018, the Alliance surveyed its members to gather an NGO testimony of the DOA, its impact and the contribution and roles of different actors including the NGOs themselves. The figure below is derived from this survey.

⁶ [Decade of Action - NGOs Perspectives](#)



Most NGOs attested to a shift in their roles during the DOA. A common characteristic of the way that NGOs are now operating has been to take a mixed approach, engaging in both upstream policy making and downstream service delivery. While NGOs generally acknowledge that they can have the strongest impact by focusing on policy work, it is difficult to secure funding for this type of intangible and sometimes political work, and many therefore also undertake service delivery, for which funding is easier to find.

5. Capacity building on data collection for advocacy in Asia

Through hands-on training, NGOs become familiar with tools and techniques that can help drive change. Having identified that strong local data was limiting NGOs' capacity to monitor the effectiveness of road safety interventions, make evidence-based recommendations for new initiatives and hold their governments to account for global commitments such as the DOA and SDGs, the Alliance designed a training program, the Alliance Advocate training, that would equip NGOs to collect, analyse, and use data to advocate for and implement effective, evidence-based road safety interventions. The training was tailored to address the challenge of road safety data in the regions that it was delivered. Grassroots road safety NGO leaders, who became known as "Alliance Advocates", worked on a real-life project on safe school zones in the city that the training was held. Once they had analysed the data and established their advocacy messages, they had the opportunity to presenting their proposals to influencers and decision makers. Each Alliance Advocate left with an action plan so that they could replicate what they had learned in their own local communities. Using a real-life project presented a strong case for the importance of the data collection process and outcomes. By implementing their action plans, the NGOs have gathered a significant amount of school zone safety data within their respective local communities. Armed with this data, they have advocated strategically for simple but effective low-cost infrastructure improvements around high risk schools. In doing so, they are actively contributing to the day-to-day safety of thousands of vulnerable road users.

The figure below shows the "quick wins" that the Alliance data training has achieved through its Alliance Advocates in Asia. It shows the number of schools where data collection has been done and how many improvements have been made in the period between January to July 2019.

Country	School	Status
Bangladesh	Mirpur Govt. Primary school	Improved
Bangladesh	Motijheel Ideal School & College	Ongoing
India	The Government Elementary School	Improved
India	Kendriya Vidyalaya school	
India	Ravindra Bharati	Ongoing
India	Mahaveer Public School	Ongoing
India	Nuabazar Govt. High School	Ongoing
India	Manav Mangal School	Ongoing
India	MP Bhuta Sion Sarvajanic School	Ongoing
India	Gyanodaya Vidyamandir School	Ongoing
India	Government Elementary School	Improved
India	Nutan Marathi Senior school	Improved
India	Ratnakar Vidya mandir	Ongoing
India	Sarhi International school	Improved
Islamic Republic of Iran*	Shohada, Imam Ali, Azmoodeh, Keshvari, Chamran	Improved
Islamic Republic of Iran*	Adib_Neyshaboori	Improved
Malaysia	Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (T) Kajang	Ongoing
Nepal	Mahendra Brukuti school	Ongoing
Philippines	Sajay National High School	Ongoing
Thailand	Benjamachutit Ratchaburi	Improved
Viet Nam	Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Primary School	Improved

*Although not part of Asia, two NGO leaders from Islamic Republic of Iran participated in the Asian training and are undertaking the same school assessment and improvement programs.

Out of 21 schools' areas assessed, 42 percent have received one or more road safety improvements. This has included treatments such as painting and maintaining pedestrian crossings, installation of speed calming measures, and erecting school signage among others. Even where physical improvements have

not been made, the NGOs are closely following up and providing stop gap measures including volunteering as crossing guards during peak hours when school children are at greatest risk.

This current school project in Asia is expected to be completed and evaluated in December 2019. Although it is too early to determine how many children's lives have been saved through the school zone improvements, anecdotal evidence from the school communities around the schools have indicated that parents, teachers and students are feeling safer around school zones, especially during peak hours when children are coming to or leaving school.

6. Case studies and best practices

The examples highlighted below show what can be achieved with strategic investment in road safety NGOs. It includes examples of leaders gaining new skills and mind-sets, and, as a result, NGOs becoming more visible and effective in bringing change that is gradually transforming road safety in the region.

Viet Nam

Speed reduction and School zone safety pilot program

The Asian Injury Prevention (AIP) Foundation is present in several Asia countries including Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, AIP Foundation is implementing the *Slow Zones, Safe Zones* program. It is the first-ever pilot program to reduce speed in school zones in Viet Nam and is supported by Foundation Botnar and the Global Road Safety Partnership. The program focuses on speed reduction and school zone safety through the construction of tailored school-zone modifications like speed bumps, road markings, speed reduction signs, and sidewalks. Additional program components include increased law enforcement, road safety public awareness campaign to promote positive road user behavior, and the development and testing of a nationally applicable road safety e-curriculum.

In Pleiku City, where AIP Foundation is working with Gia Lai National Traffic Safety Committee, speed limits have been reduced to 40 km/h on national roads running past Nguyen Luong Bang Primary School and 30 km/h on provincial roads running past Phan Dang Lou Primary School. After one year of implementation, AIP Foundation found that parents' knowledge of current speed limit and other traffic issues increased from 15.6 percent to 62.4 percent. The average speed of drivers around school zones in Pleiku reduced around 10 km/h for motorcycles and 15-20 km/h for cars, buses, and trucks. Reported student crashes fell from 25.3 percent to 7.4 percent with the percentage of students hurt in road crashes near program schools in Pleiku also falling to 69 percent from 88.3 percent.⁷

AIP Foundation hosted an experience sharing workshop with two other Foundation Botnar and Global Road Safety Partnership grantees, Save the Children and Plan International. The workshop included site visits to the two program schools. Next steps include advocating for continued police enforcement and advocating for continued speed reduction legislation.

Nepal

Strengthening pedestrian safety through legislation

Swatatrata Abhiyan Nepal (SAN) was one of the first cohort of Alliance Advocates in 2016. It used the advocacy skills developed on the training, especially power mapping and message development, to develop stronger relationships with key decision makers in the Ministry of Transport and traffic police and to build a network of road safety colleagues from other parts of the world. This new energy has enabled them to influence policy at the national level.

⁷ https://issuu.com/aipfoundation/docs/annual_report_2018_final_interactiv

The Government of Nepal has now drafted a new road safety law. As a result of its credibility with the government, SAN sits on a parliamentary sub-committee that is reviewing the law and advising its pedestrian safety components, especially through public education. SAN has also been building a national road safety alliance to accelerate action in all seven provinces of Nepal. To date, this national alliance is established in 10 districts of three provinces, with 11 stakeholders in Kathmandu forming the national coordination body.

The Philippines

Increasing affordability, awareness and use of standard child helmets

According to the Online Electronic Injury Surveillance System in the Philippines⁸, in the fourth quarter of 2015, of the 6,489 transport/vehicular crash-related injuries, children (0–19 years) accounted for around 30 percent of those injuries, and motorcycle crashes for 62.4 percent. Only 3.9 percent of the injured were wearing helmets.

It is common in the Philippines, to see child passengers on motorcycles with no helmets while the adults are wearing helmets. Safe Kids Worldwide Philippines (SKWP) was also a beneficiary of the first Alliance Advocate training. The program has helped the NGO to accelerate its helmet campaign. It has built partnerships with helmet manufacturers to increase the affordability of standard child helmets for the public, and with motorcycle dealers to encourage corporate social responsibility initiatives to distribute free standardized helmets.

The networking and coalition-building skills gained on the training have helped SKWP to forge an important relationship with a national chain of shopping malls where helmet promotion events increase visibility and attract high levels of participation. Stronger communication skills have led to productive relationships with Bloomberg Fellows, linking the NGO with the government legal office responsible for developing the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the *Children's Safety on Motorcycles Act of 2015* (R.A. 10666). As a result, SKWP was invited to sit on the technical working committee and played an advisory role in bringing the rules and regulations into force. Improved reporting skills enabled Safe Kids Worldwide Philippines to prepare a more substantive account of the distribution of 900 helmets at 17 schools in three cities. At these events, in 2017, 17,468 students and 15,348 parents were reached by key road safety messages.

India

Resource mobilization and partnerships for sustainability

Alliance Advocate TRAX used the action plan developed during training to design a campaign dubbed 'Helmet India'. The program promotes the use of affordable standardized helmets as part of a healthy lifestyle—a lifesaving device, not a luxury item—appropriate for the Indian context, for all ages. Community mobilization, power mapping, coalition building, and constant dialogue with central and state government, enforcement agencies and helmet manufacturers are shaping strategic partnerships and more effective advocacy. TRAX is has conducted research to identify the specific barriers to standardized helmet use among different Indian populations. This analysis has served as a baseline for monitoring and assessing TRAX interventions. TRAX has conducted a motorcycle helmet workshop with the Central Road Research Institute during National Road Safety Week in January 2017 and has organized a state conference on standard helmets in northern India with the support of local authorities and civil society to generate demand and to energize stakeholders to move this work forward. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with Amity University in New Delhi to promote road safety on campus. Partnerships and collaboration between many actors drive all of TRAX work and ensure that available resources are utilized prudently and results-oriented objectives are achieved.

⁸ <http://www.roadsafetyngos.org/walking-the-talk/>

TRAX also recognizes the importance of positive images in the media to change mind-sets and behaviour; they have launched a media content initiative to address this issue. The NGO has begun working with the Advertising Standards Council of India and other stakeholders to advocate for guidelines on the depiction of motor vehicles in advertisements, so as to discourage risk-taking and other harmful behaviours.

As a direct application of data collection skill gained from Advocate training, TRAX is carrying school zone safety audit and a survey of road users, building on work that was initiated by the International Road Federation, India Chapter. Findings from this research have been used to revise plans for the 'Speed 30' campaign and shared with schools in the target area and local officials. In their report, TRAX made recommendations for improvements that would include small-scale interventions by schools and larger, costlier improvements to infrastructure to be undertaken by local government.

Malaysia

Research and application of saving children's lives on the road

Safe Kids Worldwide Malaysia is domiciled at Department of Community Health at the University Putra Malaysia (UPM). It leads implementation-based studies related to child injury prevention, with road safety as one of five focus areas. Specific areas of research have included compliance behaviour around seat belts, child safety seats, and motorcycle helmets. According to the head researcher¹⁷, one of the greatest challenges to road safety in Malaysia is that people generally feel safe on the roads, and they do not expect to be involved in a crash. This false sense of security is based on the low probability of a crash event occurring over their driving years. And yet, when a crash does happen, the effects can be devastating for individuals and their families.

Communication and coalition building skills gained on the Alliance Advocate training have helped the NGO to promote its standardized child helmet campaign. The involvement of policymakers and other stakeholders in helmet distribution facilitates access to schools and lends credibility to the NGO's work. Strategic use of social media (Facebook and the university website) has created a groundswell of interest in the campaign and media coverage has increased dramatically. Presence on social media has resulted in TV interviews, radio interviews, more than 50 articles in the press, and a strong social media presence. This new experience away from the academic aspects of road safety has made Safe Kids Malaysia more visible in the community and using its research to raise awareness and influence behaviour change.

As a result of the helmet campaign, over 1500 children have received standardized helmets (funded by Halliburton), and 20 schools have participated in education sessions. The evaluation of behaviour change results is still underway, but anecdotal evidence suggests a significant increase in standard helmet use by children with some possible spill over effect expected in helmet use by adults. In Malaysia, the price of standardized helmets is relatively affordable, but the demand is low and consequently the supply has remained low; Safe Kids Malaysia hopes to generate demand through their interventions, which will increase supply and possibly decrease the price.

7. Conclusions

NGOs in Asia are well placed to assist in the design of local solutions to address the road death pandemic, but action is often hampered by gaps and shortcomings caused by inadequate resources, low level skills, lack of focus, absence of government consultation, and poor internal management.

Capacity building has helped NGOs to constantly evaluate their role, and use data more robustly, resulting in successes such as those highlighted in this paper. Smaller NGOs operating at the local level are becoming more organized and playing a key role in gathering primary data in real time. This has given credibility to their work, facilitated more successful partnerships, and enabled them to keep their governments accountable.

With plans underway to launch the Asia Chapter of the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety, NGOs in Asia have the opportunity to reposition themselves and articulate their role even better. This will be particularly important when the DOA comes to a conclusion in 2020. New initiatives and frameworks to advance the global road safety agenda are being defined, such as the Global Road Safety Performance Targets agreed by UN Member States in 2017 and must be tailored to the Asian context. The Asia Chapter will intensify the work started by the Alliance Advocate program in the region, building capacity and amplifying the voice of the NGO network in a more targeted way, aligned to the specific challenges of Alliance member NGOs in Asia.

References

- AIP Foundation. (2018). AIP Foundation Annual Report 2018. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/aipfoundation/docs/annual_report_2018_final_interactiv
- GBD Diarrhoeal Diseases Collaborators. (2017). Estimates of global, regional, and national morbidity, mortality and aetiologies of diarrhoeal diseases: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015, vol. 17, no. 9, pp. 909-948.
- Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety. (2017). Walking the Talk. Retrieved from <http://www.roadssafetyngos.org/walking-the-talk/>
- Henderson, M. (2016). Summary: Report on the Learning Needs Assessment for the Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-tiVw1CPXcNQ3pnVUp5YkY4aEU/view>
- The Decade of Action for Road Safety. (2018). Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uXzrLEaedzqwibiyqOsnQoJqnHHfBE-G/view>
- United Nations. (2019). Sustainable Development Goal 3. Retrieved from <https://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>
- WHO. (2018). Global Status report on road safety. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2018/en/
- WHO. (n.d.). Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/plan_english.pdf?ua=1