



Urgent Call to Action for Africa: Prioritize Road Safety Now

The Africa region's economy is growing faster than any other continent's. Access to jobs, education, and healthcare are key drivers for growth across the region and are accompanied by increasing motorization, a higher vehicle population, and expanded infrastructure to meet rising demand and enable connection of goods and services to markets. In Africa, road transport carries 80% of goods and 90% of passengers.

This success brings some serious and painful consequences. **Africa has 2% of the world's cars but 16% of the world's road deaths, and more than 300,000 people lose their lives in road traffic crashes every year¹.** While road fatalities in all other regions of the world are decreasing, in Africa, they continue to increase.

Imagine if three average-sized passenger planes crashed every single day in Africa?

The media would be outraged, individuals would demand action, governments would legislate for safer air travel, and airlines would improve their planes and procedures. Yet this is the number of people who die on the continent's roads each day, and, shockingly, the daily death toll is accepted as the price of modern life.

Road traffic crashes affect everyone but are particularly devastating for those who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. In Africa, road crash is the fourth leading cause of death of people age 5–44; more than 75% of casualties are among those of the productive age, between 16–65 years; and 65% of those killed are pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcycle drivers. **There is a direct link between the impact of road crashes and worsening poverty in Africa²:** 73% of road deaths are among males, leaving families without a breadwinner. In addition to road deaths, hundreds of thousands more people each year suffer long-lasting injuries from road crashes. Often, it is not only the victims who lose the ability to earn and support their families but also the family members who have to care for them. Medical costs and reduced income often lead families into crippling debt. At a national level, it is estimated that countries lose 3% or more of GDP annually as a result of road traffic crashes.

Serious action is needed, and it is needed now.

The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety vision is 50% by 30: **a reduction of road fatalities and injuries by 50% by 2030.**

Some African countries have taken strong steps to address the road death pandemic, but overall, progress at the national and regional levels across the continent is uneven and largely off track. **Action is hampered by gaps and shortcomings in responses,** ranging from inadequate resources, a lack of focus, ill-equipped emergency care systems for crash responses, and the absence of consultation with civil society organizations that are well placed to assist in the design of adequate local responses.

A number of commitments and mechanisms have advanced the global road safety agenda since 2011: the adoption of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020, incorporation of road safety into the Sustainable Development Goals 3.6 and 11.2, UN Resolution 70/260, UN legal instruments, the first set of voluntary global road safety targets, and the WHO Save LIVES package. Many countries are working toward their visions with a variety of management systems, such as sustainable Safety, safe system approach, and Vision Zero. The African UN Member States have agreed on the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

¹ https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2013/report/factsheet_afro.pdf

² Africa Development Bank Group, Transport & ICT Department, *Road Safety in Africa: Assessment of Progresses and Challenges in Road Safety Management System*, December 2013



Development, which includes road safety, the Accra Declaration, a SADC transport protocol (the Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology), and the African Road Safety Charter.

These pledges and instruments provide a framework to address road safety, and the African states have committed to them. **Now it is time to turn commitment into concrete action.** We must seize this window of opportunity to scale up action on road safety. **By doing so, we will not only save lives and empower others to save lives, but also reduce poverty, stimulate economic growth, and promote environmental sustainability.**

The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety and its members, a unified voice for civil society in Africa and around the world, see glimpses of change, but the real work is just starting. We are a trusted and serious partner in the movement for road safety, and we are ready to partner with governments, communities, and the private sector to achieve safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all.

The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety calls for all governments in Africa to:

- Take the lead in road safety—through political ownership, long-term vision, and strategic leadership
- Put people first in road safety actions and involve NGOs, which are often the eyes, ears, and voice of their communities
- Scale up financing for road safety
- Base actions on evidence and act accountably

Take the lead: political ownership, long-term vision, and strategic leadership

Despite commitment at the UN level, a number of countries still do not have a national road safety action plan in place or have an action plan that has not been implemented and is just a piece of paper. This lack of planning and investment has devastating consequences. It is time to stop merely reacting to the problem and instead demonstrate proactive and sustained political leadership, to ensure that actions to prevent road crashes deliver a real, long-term impact.

The multifaceted nature of road safety means that the implementation of a national action plan requires the commitment and involvement of several different ministries within the government, including the ministries of health, transport, education and others. However, owing to poor cross-ministerial communication and coordination, implementation is often ad hoc and ineffective.

Road safety needs to have a home in a lead ministry. Without a designated ministry as the focal point, road safety is prevented from moving higher up the political agenda, awareness and expertise are fragmented between departments, and road safety competes with too many other priorities.

The fragmented government approach is exacerbated by road safety being addressed only at the national level in many countries and lack of investment at the local level, where challenges are often far greater due to lack of road safety knowledge and weak enforcement of existing laws. Governments are crucial in establishing policy, laws, and standards, but it is also important that they utilize available resources and partners. NGOs are on the ground and integrated into their communities. They are well placed to provide support through localized awareness creation; advocacy for policy, laws, and standards; and effective implementation.

We call for:

- Every country in Africa to have an appropriately resourced lead agency with the capacity and will to enact change, demonstrated by a clear framework for accountability and a multiyear national action plan that is adequately resourced



- Every country in Africa to have a compulsory national action plan for road safety that has been designed through consultation with diverse stakeholders, including NGOs; national action plans must have targets and indicators in line with the 12 voluntary targets for road safety agreed to by UN Member States
- Every country in Africa to integrate road safety systematically into urban development and mobility planning, as well as into health service policies that improve emergency, treatment, and rehabilitation services suited to traffic victims' needs

We commit to:

- Being a partner in raising awareness among policy makers about the importance of prioritizing road safety as a matter of economic, social, and sustainable development
- Ensuring our work and advocacy is aligned with the 12 voluntary targets agreed to by UN Member States
- Bridging the gaps between national and local levels; we are already present at the local level, where we work with communities to secure buy-in awareness and advocate for policies, laws, and standards

Put people first in road safety actions and involve NGOs

Working alongside people and in communities, NGOs are the eyes, ears, voice, and conscience of their communities. They represent the diverse groups of people that make up society—those who are directly affected by lack of road safety: workers, youth, women, traffic victims, persons with disabilities, etc.

NGOs' analyses and recommendations are valuable contributions in the design of well-informed, adequate policy solutions. NGOs are able to demonstrate how the benefits of road safety interventions outweigh their costs. They can identify good practices and implement pilot projects that can be scaled up by governments. They can also help increase public support for government policies. NGOs play a key and respected role as catalysts for action in their communities; they are enthusiastic and want to be involved. But many NGOs in African countries operate in challenging environments, and rather than being seen as a partner, NGOs are ignored or even impeded. Member NGOs of the Alliance in Africa usually describe the relationship between governments and NGOs as uneven. Governments need to create enabling conditions that will allow efficient collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders, building capacity and commissioning NGOs to provide services on their behalf.

Effective road safety requires the participation of everyone; NGOs are a necessary part of the road safety equation.

The need to step up support to the NGO movement for road safety in Africa is urgent. The Alliance has, through its membership in the region, a strong role to play.

We call for:

- Governments in Africa to recognize NGOs as key partners in the design and implementation of national road safety plans and as part of the leadership for planning and design
- Governments in Africa to establish road safety collaboration frameworks that include NGOs

We commit to:

- Constructive dialogue with governments, to offer evidence, analyses, and recommendations for



- better road safety governance and regulation for the benefit of people and communities
- Continuing to build our capacity, to learn, and to showcase how NGOs can contribute to the implementation of national plans
- Better coordinating our work and building partnerships to base our work on evidence

Scale up financing for road safety

In addition to coordinated efforts among various levels of government, a number of important nongovernment partners—such as police agencies, health professionals, and other NGOs organized as a national network—play significant roles in the successful delivery of road safety initiatives. A coordinated road safety strategy recognizes the inherent limitations in individual engineering, enforcement, and education efforts and advocates for an integrated multidisciplinary response. It ensures that sectoral activities that are meant to strengthen each other are implemented at the right time and according to plans.

No single organization has either the resources or the mandate to undertake all road safety projects. Furthermore, because the scope of potential projects is diverse, road safety needs to be addressed by a wide range of stakeholders. It is important to work with and support existing community initiatives as well as cooperatively develop new programs and initiatives.

NGOs generally report that governments are reluctant to partner with or provide funding to NGOs for road safety. Less than 10% of NGOs receive funding from their national governments, and only 19% identify local governments as a funding source. Moreover, many NGOs report that they have been invited to lead on road safety initiatives outsourced to them by their governments but without being provided the necessary financial support or political backup, making it very difficult to succeed.

According to a survey recently carried out by the Alliance among its members, 86% of NGOs in Africa assessed their financial situation to be insufficient. Many member NGOs have been forced to use personal funds, due to the lack of other funding sources.

Funding constraints challenge the implementation of planned activities and NGOs' staffing needs. Without adequate funding, they cannot recruit sufficient, suitably qualified employees. As a result, they are often unable to assume the role of experts and technical advisors who provide the most valuable support and benefit to their governments—which many NGOs feel should be their primary role.

We call for:

- Recognition of and reward for the vital role played by NGOs in road safety activities, through sustainable funding from national and local governments, as well as corporate and private sectors
- Stronger support from donor institutions to empower all road safety stakeholders, including governments and NGOs in the African region, to enable them to develop adequate policies and action, notably to collect, analyze, use, and share quality crash data

We commit to:

- Developing partnerships, continuing to build coalitions, and delivering effective road safety actions at all levels—actions that are aligned with the voluntary targets and are evidence based
- Pooling resources and collaborating with other road safety actors to achieve the road safety SDG targets

Base actions on evidence and act accountably



Global data on road safety, such as the *WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety*, is useful and available. Yet, detailed data at national and local levels, while vital, is often not accessible. In the absence of accurate, timely, and reliable data, it is impossible to measure what is being done to address road safety: to encourage what works, hold accountable those who are failing, and stimulate a culture where agreements are monitored and evaluated. Without reliable data, the effectiveness of government and NGO activities is compromised. Statistics are crucial for measuring the magnitude of the road safety situation in a given country. Routine data collection on key indicators is essential for monitoring national and local initiatives and promoting evidence-based behavior changes. The establishment of the Road Safety Observatory for Africa will go a long way to creating and maintaining a reliable database, but there also needs to be better collection and data sharing at local levels.

As an example, in a recent assessment by the Alliance in Africa, 60% of the countries assessed had no available national data for road crash fatalities and injuries among schoolchildren. Where data was available (30%), it was inaccurate and unconsolidated.

Without comprehensive, accurate data and guidelines for solutions, countries in Africa cannot collect the resources they need or design evidence-based strategies and interventions that will address the road safety crisis. They must implement formalized processes to track policies, performance, commitments, resources, and results and find ways to access information on what works and why and what requires increased attention or improvements. Without these, it is impossible for governments to be kept accountable or to demonstrate their progress on commitments.

Accountability is crucial for political, systemic, and programmatic changes; it is key to tracking progress on road safety. Accountability ensures that decision makers have the information required to meet road safety needs and to understand the rights of all citizens in their countries.

Where NGOs are able to provide technical expertise and perspectives on the development of road safety policies and practices, progress will accelerate.

Many NGOs point out that they have used the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 to hold their governments accountable for these commitments, influencing road safety policy by ensuring that these international obligations are met. They consider their watchdog role difficult to manage: it has been a challenge to gain the trust of government decision makers, and they have sometimes been perceived as anti-government. They must find a balance between two roles: monitor/enforcer and partner.

In those countries where some data is available, NGOs have observed that it was often not being used effectively to support analysis and dissemination of strategic national plans.

We call for:

- More resources to build, collect, and analyze data, including sociological research, to understand better the root causes of road behaviors in given contexts
- More resources to develop the institutional support and technical skills in government ministries and departments, to ensure that reliable data is available and used to facilitate evidence-based planning and results

We commit to:

- Basing our work on evidence and scaling up our efforts to establish partnerships with academia, to provide better and more reliable data
- Developing a benchmarking tool to provide a core set of indicators that can be used to assess governments' progress toward the voluntary targets and UN legal instruments
- Developing a template for a civil society status report, which will be a form of civil society



monitoring; its aim will be to understand different national responses to road safety and assess them from the perspective of civil society