

YOUTH AND ROAD SAFETY ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Globally road traffic injuries are the leading killer of young people. More than 400.000 young people die every year and millions more are injured. 91% of the world's fatalities on the road occur in low and middle income countries, mostly male. Three main factors come together to put youth at more risk of road crashes worldwide: age, inexperience, and gender.

Young road users are not the problem, instead we have a 'young road users problem'. They are victims of a system that had failed to protect them. Everyone involved in road safety need to recognize the needs of youth in order to help keep them safe: these terrible losses are not the price society has to pay for mobility. In order to turn the tide also young people need to be involved in improving road safety. When young people are engaged as partners, not only target audience, they will feel ownership of the initiatives.

YOURS – Youth for Road Safety, is a global youth-led NGO that started operations early 2010 and is advocating for youth and road safety issues, inspiring – connecting and uniting young people and is developing youth capacities. Recognizing some great youth initiatives among members of the global youth network for road safety, YOURS strongly believes in peer-to-peer communication.

1. LEADING KILLER OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Road traffic injuries cause around 1.3 million deaths and 20-50 million injuries annually. Some of these injuries lead to lifelong disability including brain and spinal cord injury. They are the leading cause of death of children and young people from 15-29 years[1]. More than 400.000 young people die every year and millions more are injured.

91% of the world's fatalities on the roads occur in low and middle income countries. More than half of deaths occur among individuals between 15 and 44 years of age and 73% of all road traffic fatalities are male. Victims are in the prime of life and often bread winners of their families. Their loss can push their families further into poverty. On a national level this will lead to major losses in productivity and workforce loss which can seriously challenge economic sustainability.

1.1. Why are young people over represented in these statistics?

Three main factors come together to put youth at more risk of road crashes worldwide: age, inexperience, and gender. This is in addition to the other factors that also affect other segments of the population, such as lack of legislations, insufficient law enforcement, inadequate infrastructure, unsafe vehicles, and trauma care services that are not up to standard.

1.1.1 Age

Young people are less able to assess risk, more likely to test their boundaries, more likely to overestimate their abilities, and have high levels of sensation seeking behavior compared to the older population.

1.1.2 Inexperience (*novice drivers*)

Good drivers are made not born. Enough experience is needed before a person becomes a good driver. Novice drivers need to think about their driving actions, which can cause mental overload and distraction. They are also less able to perceive hazards, control the vehicle, or make quick decisions.

1.1.3 Gender

Males are more inclined to risk-taking and sensation seeking behavior. They are also more likely to overestimate their abilities. Among drivers, young males under the age of 25 years are almost three times as likely to be killed as their female counterparts[2].

1.2. Who is most affected?

In addition to young road users, males, and novice drivers, The socioeconomic condition of a family affects the likelihood of a child or young adult being killed or injured in a road traffic crash. Those from economically poor backgrounds are at greatest risk. This relationship is true not just between higher-income and lower-income countries, but within countries as well[2]. In the United Kingdom and Sweden, for example, poorer people are more likely to be involved in a crash than their more affluent counterparts[3].

1.3. Recognizing the problem

Within the Safe System Approach, enough attention needs to be devoted to the main victims of road traffic crashes, the youth. Young road users are not the problem. They are victims of a system that had failed to protect them. Governments, businesses, researchers, academics, community based organizations and the media, everyone involved in road safety, need to recognize the needs of youth in order to help keep them safe.

For example, public education campaigns targeted at youth need to use the right tools and messages that will reach and influence youth. An understanding of the psychology of the youth, what drives their behavior, what can influence the choices they make, and what kinds of messages they are more likely to respond to is needed. Using the same communication channels youth themselves use, such as social media, will help the message reach the right audience.

Public education campaigns or efforts to raise awareness of youth also have to overcome other barriers. Young people are likely to be rebellious and less likely to accept information coming from people with authority such as parents, teachers, or police officers. Involving young people in developing and executing road safety campaigns and other initiatives can help overcome these challenges. When young people are engaged as partners, not only target audience, they will feel ownership of the initiatives. Instead of exerting peer pressure resulting in unsafe behavior, they can have a positive influence on their friends and become role models. This is where a peer-to-peer approach to communicating road safety messages can be effective. In chapter 3 there is more information about the theory behind this.

1.4. Is this the price we have to pay for our mobility?

Road traffic injuries were considered for a long time the price we have to pay for our mobility and that nothing can be done about them. Road safety was also considered a national problem for the transport sector alone and its health, social, and economic impacts were not highlighted. This has contributed to some kind of acceptance among people, civil society, and governments alike. These ideas are no longer acceptable. It is not acceptable that the children and youth of today have to grow with this problem that is threatening their existence.

In order to turn the tide, young people, as main victims, need to be involved in improving road safety. They have an important role to play and can share the responsibilities for keeping themselves, their families and peers safe. Young people are capable of being part of the solution to the road safety problem.

2. ABOUT US

In 2007, 400 young road safety advocates from around the world assembled at the United Nations in Geneva to discuss road safety at the first ever World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, organized by the World Health Organization and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. At this Assembly, youth leaders were inspired and empowered to do more to make the world's roads safe for young people. In addition to the UN Youth Declaration for Road Safety, the crowning achievement of the Assembly, a wish emerged to create an international youth-led and youth-oriented nongovernmental organization (NGO) for road safety.

YOURS – Youth for Road Safety was launched late 2009 during the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in front of, and endorsed by world leaders. In January 2010 YOURS started to become a fully operational independent youth NGO and executing its planned activities to make the world's roads safe for young people. YOURS is an official member of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, representing the youth voice on a global level.

2.1. Our activities

YOURS has three strategic pillars:

- 1) advocating for youth and road safety issues on a regional and global level;
- 2) inspiring, connecting and uniting young people to become road safety activists and enabling them to network and share information, and finally;
- 3) developing youth capacities.

In line with its strategy and among other activities, a first global advocacy campaign; the World Crossing Campaign was launched; free road safety awareness posters were released for the launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety; an informal global youth network for road safety was formed; and a Workshop on Youth and Road Safety was organized in Cambodia. In addition, a website (an information hub on youth and road safety issues), monthly newsletters and social media channels were launched.

Furthermore, with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) YOURS's first publication, Youth and Road Safety: A welcome Kit, will be published in 2011. Finally, YOURS co-organized the Middle-Eastern Youth Assembly for Road Safety and

participated in the European Youth Assembly for Road Safety at the European Commission.

The Global Youth Network for Road Safety

YOURS has set-up a global youth network for road safety and is striving to have youth representatives in all countries, working together to beat the global road safety crisis. Becoming a member of the YOURS network is absolutely free. The network members are mainly youth advocates for road safety and are the fundament of the organization and the reason why YOURS exists.

1.1.4 *Membership Benefits*

Joining the youth network is not just about seeing what other young people are doing for road safety in their countries. Members get a whole host of benefits that go beyond linking organizations together. The YOURS network operates in a professional and friendly atmosphere giving youth the tools to collaborate and motivate each other. Joining the network gives youth a strong online presence and enables them to bring their local/regional/national issues to a global level which will amplify awareness of our shared cause. Benefits of joining the YOURS network are:

- Increased access: youth will obtain access to resources, information and relevant news that will help them with their improve their work and remain up to date with the latest information.
- Increased efficiency: youth do not have to spend time re-inventing the wheel when someone else has done it in another place. They can learn what works and how to do it through regular spotlight features and showcasing of good practises.
- The multiplier effect: being part of the network means that any information they post will automatically be sent to the global youth network, which is the 'multiplier effect'. This means that any update about their road safety project will be transmitted to a global network giving their project increased exposure, credibility and the potential to find donors for their work.
- Solidarity and support: working on their project or in their organization can often be lonely or isolating; joining the network offers youth solidarity and support with like-minded and like-driven people who are working towards a similar goal; road safety and young people.
- Increased visibility and credibility: visibility of their organizations is brought to a regional and global level; thousands of people log on to YOURS website each month meaning showcasing their project or organization could give them the visibility they need. Being part of the Global Youth Network can increase their credibility and portray them as a professional and serious organization/group.

1.1.5 *Membership Criteria*

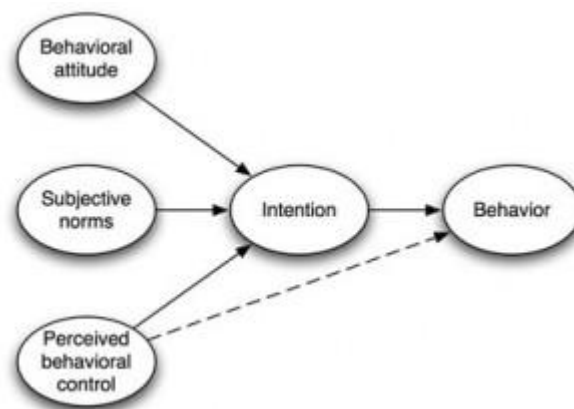
Next to benefits, the network also has criteria for joining. To maintain the health of the youth network, members are young people between 15-30 years old who:

- work for a youth-led Non-Governmental Organization/non-profit organization/social enterprise/charity/stand alone project focussing on road safety with a primary/some focus on young people; or are individuals active/interested in road safety
- agree to be a Road Safety Role Model
- provide correct information about their organization, projects and activities.

- contribute as an active member of the network sharing their recent activities at least once every sixth month
- indicate their support needs/requirements from the network
- are willing to participate in YOURS' awareness campaigns, webinars and (online) workshops
- are willing to give feedback on YOURS' projects and offer feedback on improving the network
- operate in the best interests of the network and are willing to learn

3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN CHANGING BEHAVIOR OF YOUTH?

Changing behavior of (young) people is a rather difficult task. The 'Theory of Planned Behavior' of Azjen shows that a positive attitude towards road safety has an influence on the actual behavior of (young) people. This theory is focused on explaining and predicting behavior. According to this theory the choice of the behavioral intention is determined by three aspects: the attitude towards the behaviour (for example: personally believing that wearing a helmet is good), the subjective norm in society (all my friends are wearing helmets) and the perceived behavioral control (I will probably get caught if I don't wear my helmet)[4].



Theory of Planned Behavior, Azjen (1991)

3.1. Peer to Peer communication

Young people can play an important role themselves in influencing the behavioral attitude and the subjective norm among youth. A great tool for influencing the attitude of a young person is using peer-to-peer communication. An aspect of peer-to-peer communication is that a young person is the sender of the message and not a police officer or anyone else with authority. A young person can be more open for a road safety message coming from a peer because youth are more rebellious by nature and young people are more influenced by their friends/peers than by anyone else.

Because young people often are influenced by 'peer pressure', it is also important to positively change the subjective norm or social values. When it is not socially accepted by your friends to drive after drinking alcohol, it is another obstacle for a person to drink-and-drive. This is another reason to engage and get young people into road safety.

Please find in the next paragraph some examples from around the world of young people sensitizing their peers and influencing their behavioral attitude.

3.2. Spotlight on youth success stories

3.2.1 TeamAlert, the Netherlands

Big idea: Raising awareness among young people about alcohol and drug consumption and driving.

How they did it: Youth from TeamAlert developed De Witte Waas, a campaign about using drugs and alcohol in traffic. They talk to festival visitors, between 18-25 about the dangers of using drugs and alcohol and hand out gadgets to support the message. The campaign has been running since 2008 and reaches 97,000 people every year.

Key message: it can be difficult to introduce new ideas or concepts to people and changing behavior takes time. Take time to talk youth and engage them in discussions. Having youth approach each other is an effective way of communicating road safety messages.



3.2.2 Canadian Road Safety Youth Committee (CRSYC), Canada

Big idea: To represent young people of Canada in national road safety initiatives and organizations

How they did it: After the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety in 2007, the Canadian delegates were energized more than ever. They formed the CRSYC and created its strategic plan; a plan to engage governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations with young people. They organized themselves and attained representation on the Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals, Canadian Global Road Safety Committee, Planning Committee for the Canadian Multidisciplinary Road Safety Conference, and others. They provide input and contribute to the work of these groups and have made an influence on road safety policies and programmes.

Key message: Young people can be involved in making change at all levels. They are able to build strong partnerships with key organizations, remain focused on their goal, and maintain good communication with stakeholders.

3.2.3 Fondei Ma Bori, Niger

Big idea: To educate young people about road safety using a peer-to-peer approach

How they did it: Fondei Ma Bori teamed with the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society. They obtained funding to recruit 100 peer educators to spread road safety messages in Niger's schools and colleges. They focus on a range of road safety issues such as helmet use, drink driving prevention, and visibility. The project has helped raised awareness of over 25,000 young people in Niger. Through its advocacy efforts Fondei Ma Bori also succeeded in influencing the government to increase enforcement of the Helmet law calling for motorcycles.

Key message: Young people are able to develop a good project and can be trusted to do good with funding. Youth are not afraid to approach donors for funding, and donors should not be afraid approaching youth. With support their message reached nationwide.

For more information on the global youth movement for road safety, please go to: www.youthforroadsafety.org or send an email to: info@youthforroadsafety.org.

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