

# REPORTING ON ROAD SAFETY



A GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS



World Health  
Organization

 Pulitzer Center



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## PREFACE

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This guide is the result of four years of investment working with media on road safety in ten countries. Between 2011 and 2014, WHO reached over 1300 journalists through road safety workshops. Our hope was to increase their interest in and knowledge and understanding of this surprisingly complex issue. The end result we sought was not only more stories, but also more comprehensive and compelling stories on road traffic injuries and the impact these have on people's lives.

Every day around the world, 3400 people die in road traffic crashes. Lives are dramatically changed in a matter of seconds. While the crash events themselves often become news, the full stories behind these incidents - the who, why, how, and how could these have been avoided - are not often well developed.

But road traffic deaths and injuries can be prevented. The United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 highlights the experiences mainly - but not exclusively - from high-income countries which point to concrete, effective interventions for changing how people behave on the roads and improving roads, vehicles and emergency care systems. In the context of the Decade of Action, efforts are being made to take these experiences to low- and middle-income countries where rapid motorization is evident and where more than 90% of road traffic deaths occur.

We know that far too many people die unnecessarily on the world's roads, even in high-income countries, and we know how to avoid this, but this knowledge unfortunately makes its way into the news only on rare occasions. The aim of this guide is to change that.

In the following pages, reporters will find new angles, examples of stories and projects from around the world, and tips from editors, reporters and public health experts.

We look forward to seeing more and more in-depth stories on road safety in the media soon and to witnessing a new era of road safety journalism focused on solutions and on saving lives.

Dr Etienne Krug, Director  
*Department for Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention*  
*World Health Organization*



WHY YOU SHOULD  
READ THIS GUIDE

# “YOU ARE MISSING ONE OF THE MAJOR NEWS STORIES OF OUR TIME”

By Tom Hundley, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting



Tom Hundley is the senior editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Before joining the Center, Tom was a newspaper journalist for 36 years, including nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* and as the *Tribune's* bureau chief in Jerusalem, Warsaw, Rome and London, reporting from more than 60 countries.

If you and your news organization are still covering road traffic fatalities the way news organizations have always covered them – as random, isolated “accidents” with sad but largely unavoidable consequences for the victims – you are missing one of the major news stories of our time.

Simply put, the carnage on the world’s roads is a public health crisis of epic proportions. The global death toll has already reached 1.24 million a year and is predicted to reach 1.9 million by 2030 unless something is done to reverse the current trend.

If statistics like these were the result of some microbe, some virus, some terrifying new disease, it would be a major news story. Journalists would write about the devastating impacts of this health catastrophe on communities and nations. Donor groups would mobilize funds for research for a cure. Global conferences would raise public awareness. Celebrities would lend their name to the cause.

But none of this happens for the all-too-familiar road traffic fatality. A typical news account describes an individual incident, briefly outlining the apparent cause of the crash, duly recording the names of the dead and generally regarding the whole thing as an unfortunate “accident”.

Journalists, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, must understand that what is happening on our roads is not a series of unlucky but somehow inevitable accidents but rather a public health crisis that is taking a catastrophic toll not only on the victims but on societies as a whole.

Economists and development experts now categorize the growing road traffic death toll in developing countries as a “poverty-inducing” crisis, with impacts felt for generations.

Low- and middle-income countries have about 50% of the world's vehicle traffic but nearly 90% of the traffic deaths. In Africa and parts of Asia, there is a tendency to ignore the problem, to shrug it off as the inevitable cost of economic progress or simply to accept crashes as God's will.

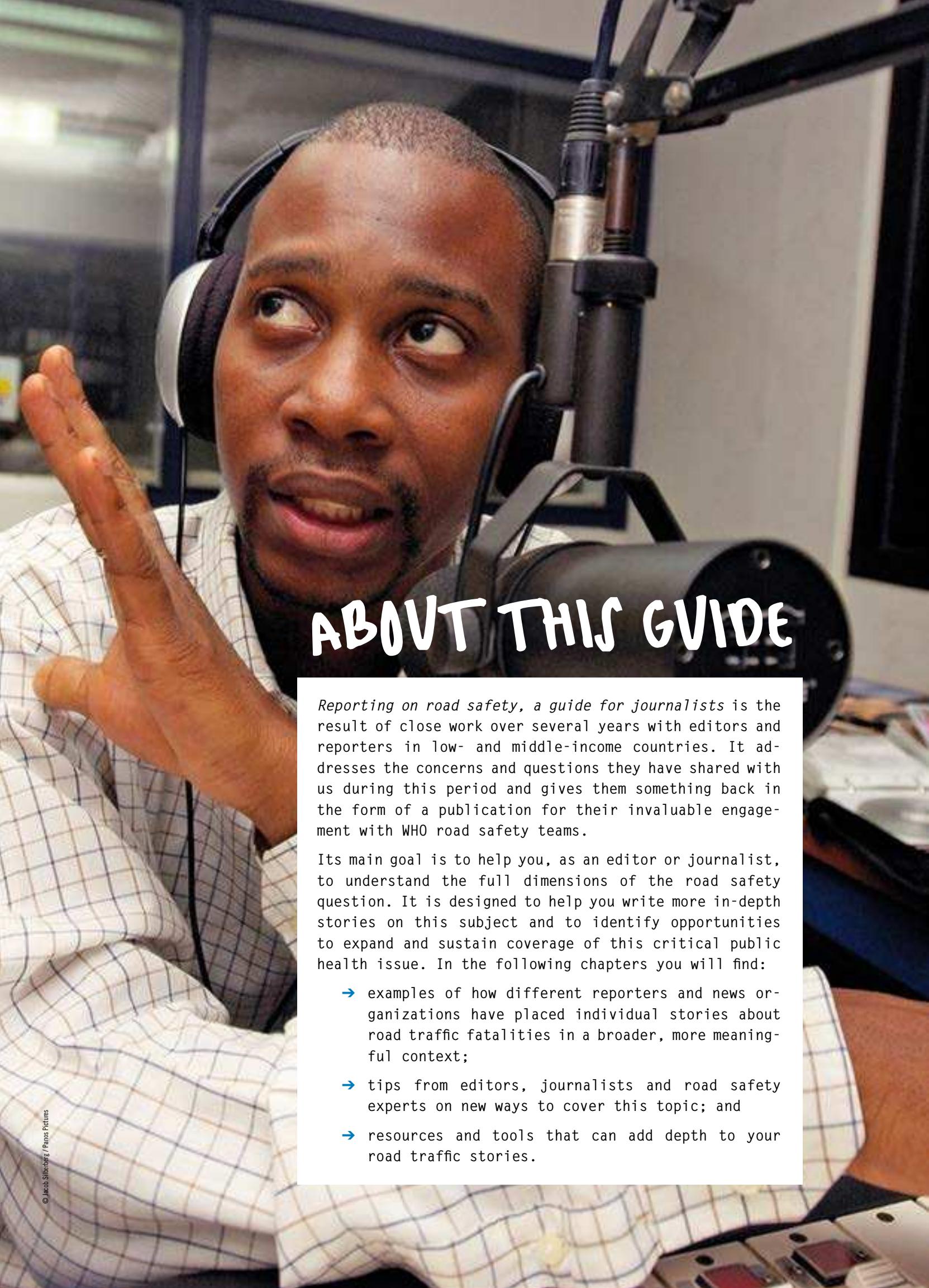
As a journalist, you have the opportunity to put this crisis in its proper perspective, to educate your audience and increase public awareness – and ultimately to influence government authorities, policy-makers and other stakeholders to take the steps necessary to fix the problem.

*“As a journalist, you have the opportunity to put this crisis in its proper perspective.”*

Reporting on road safety requires more than a passing familiarity with the driving statistics of an individual country. As a journalist, you must dig beneath the numbers to understand the complex interplay of the many factors that ultimately lead to a road traffic fatality. Road safety is a much bigger story than the fatal crash buried inside the pages of this morning's newspaper.

This is a guide for journalists who want to tell the bigger story.





# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

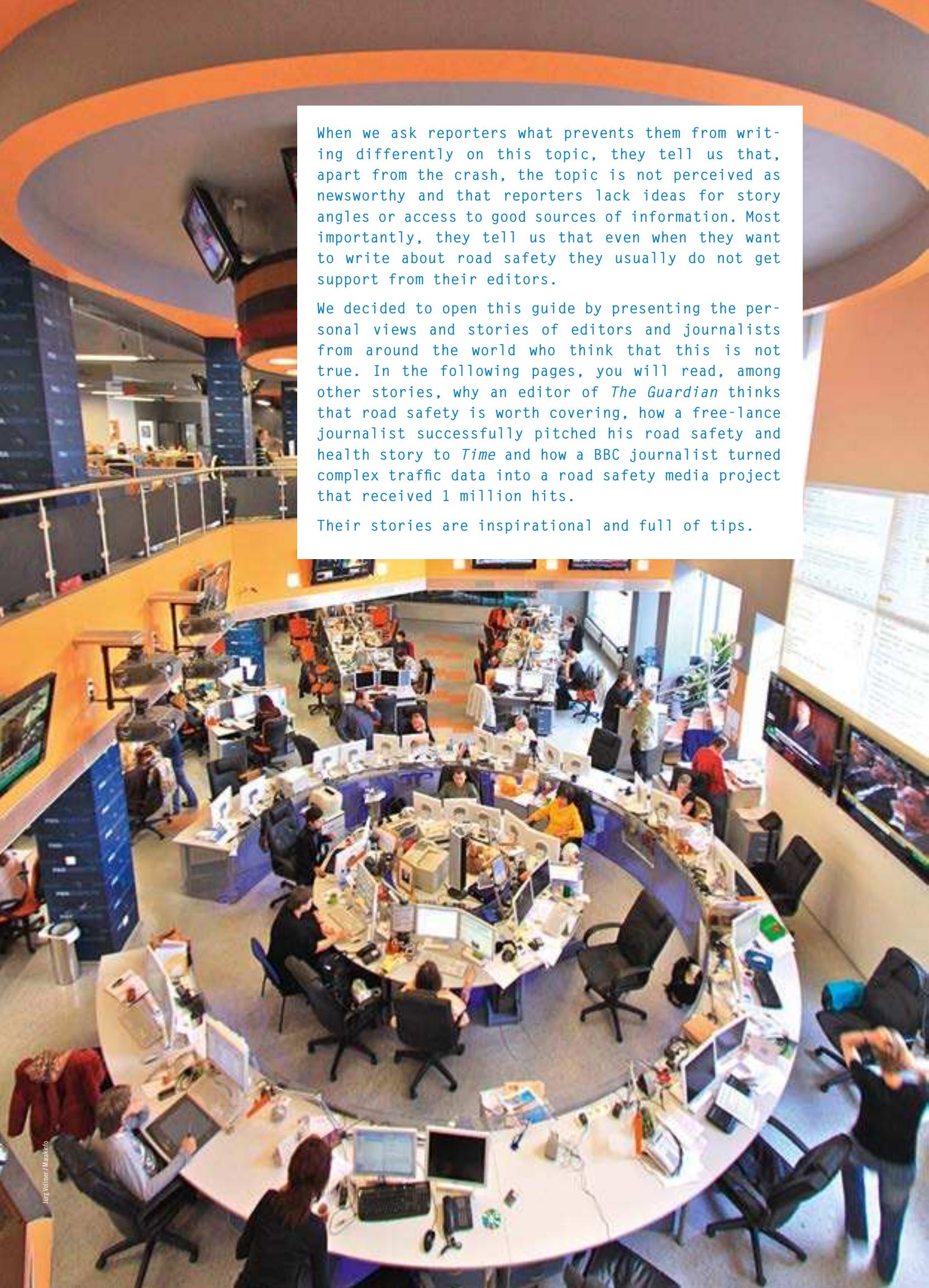
*Reporting on road safety, a guide for journalists* is the result of close work over several years with editors and reporters in low- and middle-income countries. It addresses the concerns and questions they have shared with us during this period and gives them something back in the form of a publication for their invaluable engagement with WHO road safety teams.

Its main goal is to help you, as an editor or journalist, to understand the full dimensions of the road safety question. It is designed to help you write more in-depth stories on this subject and to identify opportunities to expand and sustain coverage of this critical public health issue. In the following chapters you will find:

- examples of how different reporters and news organizations have placed individual stories about road traffic fatalities in a broader, more meaningful context;
- tips from editors, journalists and road safety experts on new ways to cover this topic; and
- resources and tools that can add depth to your road traffic stories.



**ROAD SAFETY IS  
NEWSWORTHY**



When we ask reporters what prevents them from writing differently on this topic, they tell us that, apart from the crash, the topic is not perceived as newsworthy and that reporters lack ideas for story angles or access to good sources of information. Most importantly, they tell us that even when they want to write about road safety they usually do not get support from their editors.

We decided to open this guide by presenting the personal views and stories of editors and journalists from around the world who think that this is not true. In the following pages, you will read, among other stories, why an editor of *The Guardian* thinks that road safety is worth covering, how a free-lance journalist successfully pitched his road safety and health story to *Time* and how a BBC journalist turned complex traffic data into a road safety media project that received 1 million hits.

Their stories are inspirational and full of tips.

# “AS AN EDITOR, I’M TELLING YOU: IT’S WORTH IT.”

By Annie Kelly, *The Guardian*

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Annie Kelly is an editor and journalist working for *The Guardian*. In 2012, she was appointed the commissioning editor of *The Guardian's* Global Road Safety in Focus project, a 2-year multimedia journalism initiative to pioneer a new way of reporting on road safety.

When I started as commissioning editor for *The Guardian's* Global Road Safety in Focus project, I had absolutely no prior knowledge of road safety issues. Although I've been reporting on global development for over a decade, I had never considered that road safety was a major global health issue, a significant barrier to education and an obstacle to global poverty alleviation.

I knew I wasn't alone. Initial chats about the project that I had been given drew blank stares from my colleagues on the foreign and news desks. How could we create a whole body of compelling journalism around speed bumps and pedestrian footbridges? Who, outside of the global road safety community, would read it?

From the start, it was my intention to turn those blank stares into road safety features on the news lists of editors throughout *The Guardian* offices in London. To do this, it was clear that we'd have to find not only strong news hooks but also ways of giving road safety a strong human interest angle.

*“It was clear that we'd have to find not only strong news hooks but also ways of giving road safety a strong human interest angle.”*

Some of the first features we commissioned were attempts to establish this perspective. We ran a piece about how South Africa's murder rate is almost equal to the number of people who die on the roads and how children trying to get to school are often those who lose their lives. We commissioned a video journalist to ride with Mexico's “alcohómetro” squads, who were trying to curb drink-driving in Mexico City's party areas, and teamed an award-winning photographer with a disabled Kenyan road safety activist to create a beautiful audio slideshow from Kenya's one and only spinal cord injuries clinic.

As editor, my main challenge in the first 6 months of the project was finding journalists who could write knowledgeably and colourfully about road safety and making sure we weren't just repeating the same feature but in different countries. So, I quickly understood what stories had to have for them to be meaningful to *The Guardian's* project. Based on that, I came up with some tips on how to get your pitches and your approach into gear.



*The Guardian* launched its Global Road Safety in Focus project in May 2012 with the financial backing of the Road Safety Fund – one of *The Guardian's* first foundation-funded journalism initiatives. The idea was to make Global Road Safety in Focus as multimedia as possible, combining text, video and photos with expert opinion and analysis, data blogging and interactive initiatives. All the content would end up on a branded mini-site but would also feature on the main home page of global development, integrated with other development journalism."

The screenshot shows the *theguardian* website with a blue header. The main navigation bar includes links for 'UK', 'world', 'politics', 'sport', 'football', 'opinion', 'culture', 'business', 'lifestyle', 'fashion', 'environment', 'tech', and 'travel'. Below this, a secondary navigation bar shows 'Some' > 'world' > 'development', with links for 'europe', 'US', 'america', 'aids', 'australia', 'africa', 'middle east', and 'crisis'. The 'development' link is highlighted in blue. The 'the guardian' logo is on the right, with the tagline 'GUARDIAN OF THE WORLD'S NEWS' underneath. The main content area features a section titled 'Global road safety in focus' with a sub-headline: 'This year's reporting on global road safety is supported with funding by the Road Safety Fund. The Guardian retains editorial independence'. Below this, there are three news articles with images and dates: 20 December 2012 ('Cambodia launches campaign to cut carnage on its roads'), 27 March 2013 ('Guardian development network: Green machine: Dar es Salaam backs low-carbon buses to beat traffic jams'), and 29 March 2013 ('Uganda puts pedestrian and cyclist safety first in drive to improve its roads'). Each article has a small image and a link to the full story.



## TIPS

1. **Make a fact sheet** that you can keep with you when talking to editors about your stories. Don't bombard them with statistics, but use the data in a targeted way to emphasize just how big an issue this is.
2. **Make these statistics mean something** by putting them into the context of development goals to give a wider picture of how road traffic deaths compare with other global epidemics. For instance, can you link an increase in national car imports following a change in government trade policy to a rise in motor vehicle crashes?
3. **Ask why.** Even the fact that there are no data can be a story in itself. Police records seriously underreport the numbers of crashes and nonfatal injuries. In some countries, less than 50% of deaths resulting from road traffic crashes are reported to the police. Why?
4. **Avoid the use of too many technical terms.** For example, "vulnerable road users" will mean nothing to most people outside the road safety industry. Describe them as vendors walking along the side of a road taking goods to markets, cyclists, people on a bus trying to get to work or children walking to school, and the issue suddenly comes alive.
5. **Think about the context.** Road safety is an issue that cuts across almost every major global development pillar. It affects anti-poverty efforts, puts a huge strain on already struggling health care services, cripples people's livelihoods and stems the flow of children into the classroom. It is also a huge funding issue. While billions are spent every year on building new roads, road safety is still not a priority of many big development funders or governments.
6. **Press home the need for road safety to be a priority** in post-2015 development targets. Development issues are still all too often talked about in silos, yet road traffic deaths are a huge burden, not just on individual families and communities but also on a country's gross domestic product.
7. **Find the human story.** This is probably the most important tip of all. Road safety isn't only a policy issue, a safety issue or a development issue. Above all, it's a story about people and often about those who are forced to walk because there is no affordable public transport or to ride in unsafe buses or to cross dangerous, busy roads to get to work or school. Those who die on the roads are most likely to be the poorest and most vulnerable members of the population. Someone who is seriously injured in a road traffic crash may never be able to work again and will very probably never receive any compensation. The ripple effects of road traffic crashes can be catastrophic and tip many households into poverty.

# HOW I PITCHED MY STORY TO TIME

By Geoffrey Cain, freelance journalist

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Based in Seoul, Geoffrey Cain is *GlobalPost*'s senior correspondent for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and for the Republic of Korea. Previously, he covered the Republic of Korea for *Time*. He specializes in politics, business and health reporting and has traversed Asia, writing for *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Foreign Policy*, *The New Republic*, *Fast Company*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and others.

When I approached my editors, I promoted road safety as a riveting under-covered story that affected millions of people, often the poor and disabled. We could show how their plight was hurting entire communities and nations, not just individuals. The big-picture relevance sold them the story. The resulting story, “Asia’s latest public health crisis? Dangerous drivers”, was published in April 2011 and to this day remains one of my best-received features. I believe that this piece had a number of elements that made it a success.

I opened with a dramatic description of a terrible crash in Cambodia, in which a van full of wedding revellers was massacred on the road. At a time when parents and siblings were celebrating with their loved ones, their lives were cut short in a preventable tragedy. What better way to grab the reader’s attention?

The wedding tragedy, for all its drama, was not the core of the story but an anecdote to illustrate a deeper problem. This particular crash had sparked a national uproar, which made it a strong, newsworthy example. It revealed deep-seated concern in Cambodia, jolting the nation awake. Road traffic crashes, many people were realizing, carried enormous costs for the nation, and something had to be done.

After introducing the wedding episode, the *Time* story quickly moved in this direction. Statements about the extent of the problem were backed with all sorts of trends and figures: health care costs as a percentage of the GDP, the lack of road safety education and enforcement and the annual proportion of road traffic fatalities in low- and middle-income families.



© Mark Henley / Panos Pictures



The *Time* story came at the beginning of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Malaria and HIV/AIDS were at the centre of the global public health movement in Africa and Asia. Road safety wasn't in that realm at first, but it was starting to make an imprint in humanitarian parlance. In other words, the time was ripe for a journalist to show that the world was shifting its attention.

*“The big-picture relevance sold them the story.”*

Good journalism can show that change is possible, provided you can find a good example or two. To end the article for *Time*, I interviewed a Malaysian expert on his country's fight against road traffic fatalities, which has gone on for decades, so that other countries could glean a lesson or two from the Malaysian experience.

# “A WORKSHOP CHANGED THE WAY I WRITE”

By Guilherme Paranaiba Gouveia,  
Estado de Minas



Reporter for the *Estado de Minas*, Belo Horizonte, Brazil and a graduate in journalism from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Guilherme Paranaiba Gouveia has worked as a news reporter for television and print media. While hard news continues to constitute one of his primary activities, increasingly Guilherme has turned his attention to special reports on road safety, road infrastructure and urban mobility.

Newsrooms in Brazil, whether radio, television, newspapers or the Internet, tend to report on road safety issues as isolated, disconnected events. Because staff is limited and constrained by tight deadlines, stories are often verified by telephone through interviews with perhaps one or two sources of information, generally a law enforcement officer or a fire-fighter. If journalists are not properly prepared to report on such stories, they run the risk of leaving out crucial information – failing to ask about evidence of alcohol consumption, excessive speed or failures in road maintenance, for example.

In my early career, I had difficulty in making headway on the issue. The challenge was to come up with novel approaches to stimulate in-depth discussion and to move beyond the typical, mundane stories on road traffic crashes and congestion.

Then, one day, I attended a road safety workshop in our newsroom. The speakers showed us what comprehensive analytical coverage of the issue is and how it contributes to deeper understanding of road safety issues. They explained how such coverage can pressure authorities to take action to improve road safety. From that point on, my stories began to change.

*“The idea was to eliminate the culture of banality surrounding traffic-related fatalities.”*

# GERAIS



Front page of the *Estado de Minas* featuring Guillherme's story: Lives lost in road traffic crashes (and those yet to be lost).

DISCO FERINHO/AGÊNCIA PRESS - 18/2/2012

NOVAS AÇÕES CONTRA  
Mais 1 mil caminhoneiros  
vão combater  
em MG. Estão  
mais de 43 mil

In one of the most significant stories I wrote after the workshop, I compared all traffic-related fatalities in the first quarter of 2013 to the number of deaths from widely reported national tragedies that had stunned public opinion. The idea was to eliminate the culture of banality surrounding traffic-related fatalities and to illustrate the magnitude of the problem in my home state of Minas Gerais. I interviewed a number of experts in order to better understand why road traffic-related deaths far outnumbered those stemming from Brazil's other tragedies.

## AS VIDAS QUE O TRÂNSITO ROUBOU (E AINDA VAI ROUBAR)

PELO MENOS 561 PESSOAS MORERAM NO TRÁFEGO EM MINAS EM 2013.  
NESSE RITMO, NÚMERO DE VÍTIMAS CHEGARÁ A 2.178 NO FIM DO ANO

Em 28 de janeiro um desastre comoveu o país: depois do incêndio na Boate Kiss, em Santa Maria (RS), 241 pessoas morreram. O episódio resultou em investigações e providências que repercutem até hoje. Longe do Sul, no trânsito mineiro, uma outra tragédia se repete todos os dias. Silenciosa e mais grave. Desde o início do ano, mais de 560 pessoas morreram em ruas e rodovias do estado. É como se a catástrofe gaúcha tivesse ocorrido duas vezes em menos de quatro meses. O quadro é assustador, mas não gera a mobilização que se seguiria à queda de dois aviões em 90 dias, por exemplo. Porem, o trânsito mineiro sózinho tirou mais vidas que a soma dos acidentes com os voos 3054, da TAM - com 199 óbitos em São Paulo, em 2007 - e 447, da Air France, que matou os 228 ocupantes que seguiram do Rio para Paris, em 2009. E o pior: mantido esse ritmo, quase 2.180 pessoas terão morto vítimas de carros, motos, caminhões e ônibus até o fim de 2013.

LEIA MAIS SOBRE A TRAGÉDIA NO TRÂNSITO NA PÁGINA 18



# REPORTING ON ROAD SAFETY AS A PROJECT



Reporters tell us that road safety presents few opportunities for compelling reporting. They explain that, after writing a few in-depth stories, they run out of ways of presenting the topic to their editors and readers. We considered, however, that a leading cause of death, which kills about 3400 people every day, cannot and should not be dismissed by news organizations with a few feature stories. When we did some research on how reporters cover road safety around the world, we found creative, innovative projects that were getting the attention of large numbers of readers.

In the stories recounted above, the reporters stressed that data can be an essential part of in-depth road safety stories. For this section, we invited two reporters to talk about their experience in transforming large tables of numbers into fascinating, complex narratives read by millions of people.

The first story is an example of data journalism based on the reality in one country and a strong human angle. The second story is about a project which uses international data to present the problem from a global perspective and send an advocacy message.

Both initiatives are inspirational for their compelling narratives built on road safety data, their use of open source software and their multimedia approach.

# “I WANTED TO REPORT ROAD DEATHS IN A DIFFERENT WAY.”

By Adrian Brown, BBC



Adrian Brown has been a journalist for over 20 years reporting from the Balkans, France and the United Kingdom for newspapers, international news agencies and the BBC. He spent 6 years at BBC News online, creating original content on a wide range of subjects. He now works for the BBC's international online and television news services.

It was while working at BBC News online and specializing in data journalism that I really began to take a serious interest in road traffic deaths. I wanted to see if I could report these deaths in a different way, using the multi-layered possibilities of the Internet to provide context and detailed information as well as the human side of these fatalities.

As part of their annual round-up of road casualties, the United Kingdom's Department for Transport publishes an annual report with headline numbers alongside analysis and detailed breakdown of the figures. This is a fascinating document, full of statistical gems and eye-popping detail.

The centrepiece of our project was a searchable online map of fatalities in Great Britain. This allowed users to enter a location and view all fatal road traffic crashes in that area. Click on a crash marker, and a box provides details of whether the fatality was a pedestrian, car driver or cyclist, as well as when the collision happened plus some further information.

The key source for the map was official road casualty data, a standardized system of reporting road crashes begun in 1979. Completed by the police, the STATS19 system records a wide range of information about each

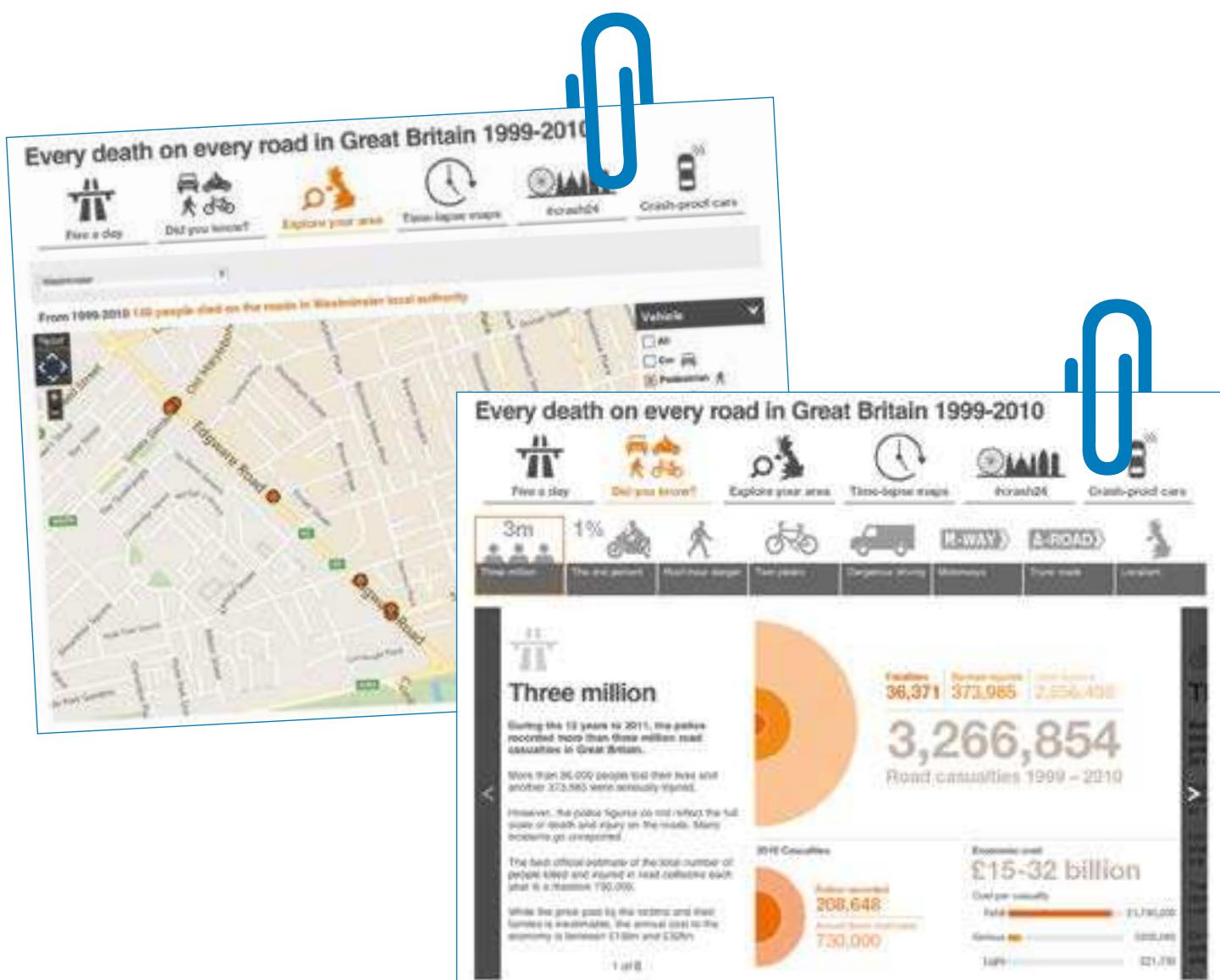
*“I quickly realized the journalistic potential of pooling several years' worth of data into an online interactive feature.”*

road collision, including the time, date, location, road conditions as well as the vehicles and casualties involved. Contributory factors, such as speed, weather and statements from those involved, are also reflected. On tracking down one of these documents, I quickly realized

the journalistic potential of pooling several years' worth of data into an online interactive feature.

The ten year slice of STATS19 data that I sampled amounted to over 1 million lines of data, all in coded cells that were decipherable with the excellent companion "cheat sheet". Dealing with that amount of data, however, required a self-taught crash course in Excel in order to sift the data for the details we needed. Soon, I had sortable lists and pivot tables that revealed some strong story lines.

My computer-developer colleagues were quickly able to plot the incidents on an interactive online map and to spit out data in graphs showing the number of fatal crashes over a typical 24-h period, crash patterns over a typical week and how these varied with the age of the victims. A series of infographics was also commissioned. While maps and infographics are a great way to display complex data in an engaging way, they can be dry for some and lack the human angle. For this element, I tried two different approaches.



First, I investigated a single fatal crash, retelling the entire episode from the point of view of all concerned, from the partner of the man who died, the rescue services who attended the incident through to the doctor who declared him dead in hospital. This was a sobering experience, but the 2500-word feature that resulted received over 1 million hits on the day. Remarkable, when you consider that the story of a man knocked off his scooter would normally merit a couple of paragraphs.

## *“The 2500-word feature that resulted received over 1 million hits on the day.”*

The second project was as ambitious. I wanted to see how I could report a single day of road incidents to give a sense of the sheer scale of the hundreds of road collisions that occur on a daily basis. I hit upon the idea of following the London Ambulance Service for a day. I was able to establish that, on average, there are around 80 call-outs to road incidents every day in the capital. Spread over a 24-h period, that would be sufficient activity to follow with a 12-strong team of reporters recording each one for television and online. To cover this, we created an online “live page” that allowed us to pull in comments and details as the day unfolded. We also had two television crews, which enabled us to put together a feature report for the lunchtime news and a longer report for the main evening news bulletin for the BBC’s London television station. This proved a huge hit online, with over 1 million page views and frenetic social media interaction. Not only did we manage to “live” report each incident in some detail, but we also sparked a series of debates and online discussions that the BBC audience could follow all in one place.

Broadly, I would say that the audience’s response was overwhelmingly positive. We received numerous e-mails commending the BBC for tackling this subject. There was a particularly strong response to the feature about the death of the scooter rider. I think the most interesting aspect of this story is that, while public interest is high, official interest in tackling the issue can be low and unambitious. Many acknowledge that there are possible solutions to reducing the number of deaths to the low hundreds or even, as Sweden has pledged to achieve, to zero, but there seems to be little political will to achieve this.

The two projects discussed in this story can be viewed here:  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/magazine/8344025.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/8344025.stm)  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8412891.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8412891.stm)



# “CREATIVE DATA VISUALIZATION FOR A GLOBAL AUDIENCE”

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By Tom Hundley,  
Pulitzer Center  
on Crisis  
Reporting

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting turned its attention to road safety after a chance meeting between Pulitzer Center founder Jon Sawyer and a World Bank road safety specialist, who told Sawyer that he was frustrated by the lack of media coverage and public awareness of what he characterized as “the biggest public health crisis that nobody has heard of”. After he showed Sawyer the data, the Pulitzer Center’s “Roads Kill” project was commissioned.

With a network of more than 300 journalists working in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, the Pulitzer Center was well positioned to prepare first-hand reports on road safety issues from almost every corner of the world.

The main feature of the project is a dynamic interactive map built with data from WHO’s *Global status report on road safety 2013* and open source tools. The map combines data on road traffic death rates with a steady stream of stories from Pulitzer Center reporters around the world. An animated tour of road safety facts serves as a narrative entry and allows users to focus on regions or explore subject areas of particular interest to them.

We wanted the map to serve as a catalyst for in-depth journalism on road safety issues. We also wanted it to be useable and “customizable” as a platform to create engagement and reporting on these issues. The map is fully embeddable, and, when the project was launched in August 2013, we invited any interested news outlet to make use of this resource on its own website free of charge. Individual readers were also invited to embed the map on their blog or website.

The response thus far has been very encouraging. The map has been embedded by hundreds of bloggers and mainstream media outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Slate*, *Gizmodo*, *The Car Connection*, *The Daily Dish*, *The Daily Mail*, *El País*, *Discovery*, *Fast Company*, *ABC*, *Vice*, *PBS* and *Visual.ly*.

Nearly a million people have viewed the map since its launch in August 2013, and many have tweeted and posted their takeaways. We have been able to keep the project fresh by adding at least one or two news stories each month and highlighting those on our website. Most of the 30 or so in-country reports were contributed by Pulitzer Center grantees working on unrelated projects in various parts of the world, but we also have had excellent contributions from external sources.

*“Projects like this show how journalism continues to evolve beyond standard reporting and investigating.”*

While the Roads Kill project is global, the model could be easily applied to regional or national road safety reporting projects. According to Visually, “Projects like this show how journalism continues to evolve beyond standard reporting and investigating. The Internet opens up a global audience, and as the audience scale changes, so does the scale of the reporting. A project like this takes a concerted effort from many different people in different organizations – and brings value to everyone.”







**ROAD TRAFFIC  
CRASHES ARE NOT  
“ACCIDENTS”**



In this guide, we look at road safety reporting from three distinct perspectives: its effects on public health, how road users are impacted, and how road safety legislation can reduce injuries and fatalities. The purpose is to help you build a framework for your own reporting, suggest possible story angles and show you some examples of what other publications and broadcast outlets have done.

How often have you thought about the implications of road traffic crashes on the public health sector? In developing countries especially, road traffic fatalities are dismissed as the inevitable by-product of growing economies and rapid motorization of the masses. The mind-set seems to be that whatever happens on the road is the business of those in charge of managing infrastructure and transport. But poorly planned and managed transport systems can have consequences on many sectors of society and most notably on public health.

Next time you have the occasion to write about a fatal crash, consider the following:

- Road traffic crashes remain a leading cause of death.
- Road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on already strained public health systems.
- Road traffic crashes affect quality of life.

In the next pages, you will find some key concepts for your narrative for each proposed angle as well as links to examples of relevant road safety stories written by reporters around the world. The links to the articles are active in the online PDF version of this guide.

## STORY ANGLE 1: ROAD TRAFFIC CRASHES ARE ONE OF THE DEADLIEST KILLERS OF THE MODERN AGE.

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About 1.24 million people die each year as a result of road traffic crashes – that's more than 3400 deaths a day. Globally, road traffic injuries are the ninth leading cause of death, ahead of malaria and diabetes and not far behind HIV/AIDS. Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death globally among young people aged 15-29 years, which means that road traffic deaths and injuries eliminate a valuable segment of the work force. Half of those who die on the world's roads are what road safety analysts call "vulnerable road users" – pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

### *"We know how to reduce road traffic injuries and fatalities."*

Like any story dealing with a public health crisis, you should frame your road safety story in a context that lets you highlight the health-related aspects of the situation. The key is to ask the right questions: Who does it impact? How widespread is it? How can it be fixed? Good statistics and data are critical for this kind of story.

If your local or national government has adopted new safety measures, you can easily use the occasion to report on the public health implications, as the story from Australia does in the examples of stories provided. But if you are reporting from a country where people are just becoming aware of the problem and no substantial discussion is being held at national level, you might consider writing a story on successful strategies being adopted in oth-

er countries with the same problem. Effective road safety interventions depend greatly on the context of each country, but the answer to a specific problem you have identified has probably been successfully addressed somewhere else in the world. This can be a useful way of framing your story and offering potential solutions for decision-makers in your country.

In short, the body of research and data related to road safety and public health is vast and often accessible. Unlike some public health crises in which there is no vaccine or cure, we already know how to reduce road traffic injuries and fatalities, and many countries have succeeded in doing so. Stories on these findings, like those featured below, can be opportunities for the media to focus attention on this deadly epidemic in a way that does not depend on the news hook of a fatal crash.

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### EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [The world's 10 leading causes of death, CNBC](#)
- [Why are roads one of the world's biggest killers?, The Guardian, podcast](#)
- [Youth dying on roads put traffic cops on alert mode, Bangalore Mirror](#)
- [Tougher laws for young drivers, The Australian](#)
- [Bangalore learns Swedish lessons in urban planning, Times of India](#)
- [For walkers and cyclists, a Swedish road-planning strategy helps save lives, San Diego Free Press](#)



## STORY ANGLE 2: ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES AFFECT OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE.

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Fatal crashes make headlines, but have you considered writing about the people who survived a crash and are now spending long days in pain, adjusting their homes to their new physical needs or trying to find a new place in society?

### *The death toll represents only the tip of the iceberg.*

The death toll represents only the tip of the iceberg of human capital and societal resources lost to road incidents. It is estimated that 20-50 million people are injured annually in road traffic crashes. These casualties tend to be highly under-reported, which is why it is difficult to estimate with more precision the indirect burden of road traffic injuries. A conservative estimate is that, for each road traffic death, 15 people require hospital treatment and 70 people suffer minor injuries.

Traffic injuries frequently result in spinal cord injuries, which dramatically change the lives of victims, either permanently disabling them or exposing them to a multitude of challenges. They face physical barriers to basic mobility as well as negative attitudes that exclude them from full participation in society.

People with spinal cord injuries are two to five times more likely to die prematurely. They also have lower rates of school enrolment and economic participation than people without such injuries. Spinal cord injury is also associated with risks for secondary conditions that can be debilitating and even life-threat-

ening, and it makes people highly dependent on caregivers.

WHO's *International perspectives on spinal cord injury* showed that, in the African Region, road traffic injuries are the main cause of these injuries, accounting for nearly 70% of all cases. In other WHO regions, spinal cord injuries related to road traffic crashes comprised from 40% of all such injuries in the South-East Asia Region to 55% in the Western Pacific Region. Like all injuries, spinal cord injuries are preventable.

Another way to tell this story is through people who have become eloquent advocates after suffering traffic-related injuries. These people and their lives can be a source of compelling, powerful human-interest stories that not only call attention to road safety issues but can also inspire others trying to cope with similar misfortune.

The stories below illustrate how, by covering such injuries, reporters can address the impact of road traffic crashes on public health systems.

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### EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [Kenya road crash victims, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Zambia's healthcare system in need of an MOT as road accidents increase, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Dubai crash victim warns of dangers of car modifications, \*The National\*](#)

## STORY ANGLE 3: PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS ARE STRAINED BY ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES.

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The most common visual associated with road traffic crash stories is the scene of a crash – the smashed or overturned vehicle, shattered glass and personal belongings scattered on the asphalt. But another powerful image could be an overcrowded emergency room and overstretched emergency-care workers. Road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on health systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where the number of victims is particularly high and the resources available are invariably scarce.

*Another powerful image could be an overcrowded emergency room and overstretched emergency-care workers.*

Consider writing about the strain placed on the health care infrastructure as a result of road traffic crashes, as in the examples provided. How many hospital beds are occupied by people injured on the road? For how long? And how much does this preventable situation cost the economy?

You could also write a story comparing the cost of reducing road traffic injuries with the cost of caring for the injured, noting that caring for road traffic injuries diverts scarce medical resources that might otherwise be used to treat other, less preventable health issues.

WHO's *World report on road traffic injury prevention* found that, in a number of low- and middle-income countries, 30-86% of trauma admissions to hospital result from road traffic injuries. The mean length of hospital stay was 20 days, and, in some countries, road traffic injury patients represented 48% of bed occupancy in surgical wards and were the most frequent users of operating theatres and intensive care units. Road traffic injuries also add to the workload of X-ray, physiotherapy and rehabilitation services. This kind of analysis can be done at national or local level by checking readily accessible data produced by local hospitals or government health ministries, as in the examples given below.

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### EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [Traffic tragedies threaten to overwhelm Bangladesh's emergency wards, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Road death, cancer and diabetes becoming Africa's hidden epidemics, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Reinventing the wheel, \*The Economist\*](#)
- [Bangladesh's road accidents take a heavy toll on poor – and on economy, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Cold ones and cars do not mix in Cape Town, \*The Pulitzer Center\*](#)

## ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR MORE STORIES WITH A PUBLIC HEALTH ANGLE

1. Comparison with other diseases: How many people die in road traffic crashes in your country? How does that number compare with the number of those dying from HIV/AIDS, malaria or tuberculosis? What about other common infectious diseases like dengue? How does the amount of money spent on preventing road traffic deaths compare with the amount spent on other diseases?
2. Who are the main victims in your country? Young people? Males? People on two-wheeled vehicles? People who do not use seat-belts or helmets?
3. Post-crash care and emergency services: What emergency services exist in your country? Can you call an ambulance? How much does this cost, and who has access? What is the so-called “golden hour”?





## SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

As we have stressed throughout this guide, road safety is a problem with effective responses. In that light, solutions-oriented journalism can be particularly useful in writing about road safety. One of the pioneers in the field is the Solutions Journalism Network ([www.solutionsjournalism.org](http://www.solutionsjournalism.org)), an organization based in New York that supports journalists to produce rigorous and compelling stories about responses to social problems.



As Tina Rosenberg, co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network, explains, true solutions journalism is not advocacy. “It’s not fluff or public relations or ‘feel good’ journalism,” she said. “It is rigorous and compelling reporting that examines the root of problems and covers realistic – because they are actually happening – responses.

*“It is increasingly inadequate for journalists to simply note what’s wrong and hope for society to create better laws or provide proper oversight.”*

“Journalism’s predominant theory of change is that pointing out social problems will spur reform. Journalists act as whistle-blowers and expose wrongdoing, but have little role to play beyond that. We believe this theory of change is insufficient. It is increasingly inadequate for journalists to simply note what’s wrong and hope for society to create better laws or provide proper oversight. The world’s problems are just too complex and fast changing. People must learn about credible examples of responses to problems in order to become empowered, discerning actors capable of shaping a better society. In this context, journalism must augment its traditional role, spotlighting adaptive responses to entrenched social ills.”

The Solutions Journalism Network recently published a free 48-page toolkit that walks reporters through the process of practicing solutions journalism, from finding a response worth covering to engaging readers/viewers with a final story. The toolkit is available on this website [www.solutionsjournalism.org](http://www.solutionsjournalism.org) and it includes an interesting example of road safety story from *The New York Times*, [De Blasio looks toward Sweden for road safety.](#)





# **ROAD SAFETY AND ROAD USERS**

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We often read stories about individuals who are killed or injured in road traffic crashes, but we seldom read stories about how the problem affects a whole class of people. Vulnerability on the road depends a lot on what you do and who you are.

*Vulnerability on the road depends a lot on what you do and who you are.*

If you live in a low-income country, if you drive a motorcycle or if you are 15-29 years of age, your chances of road traffic injuries are much higher than those of the rest of the population. Studies have shown that crashes have a disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable segments of society. Even in high-income countries, poor children are at greater risk than children from more prosperous families. In low-income countries, people from low socioeconomic groups face the greatest risk.

If you want to write about road safety with a focus on people in different risk categories, there are several ways of doing so. This approach helps readers better understand the risk factors that apply to them while at the same time suggesting steps they can take to reduce their vulnerability. Providing readers with more knowledge can contribute to reducing road traffic injuries and fatalities.

In the following pages, you will find some key concepts for your narrative from two proposed angles as well as links to examples of relevant road safety stories written by reporters around the world. The links are active in the online PDF version of this guide.







## STORY ANGLE 1: CERTAIN GROUPS ARE MUCH MORE VULNERABLE TO ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES.

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The news peg for these stories is often a new study or set of statistics. They can be interesting and useful if they focus on a specific aspect of the problem and suggest a possible solution or intervention. Consider how the problem affects a particular group, such as young people, drivers and passengers on the small motorcycles that have become the dominant mode of transport in many parts of the developing world, or people in a specific geographical area, to mention a few. Statistics demonstrating that the chances of dying in a road traffic crash depend on where people live, their age or failure to wear a helmet can help readers to identify with the problem and can also provide the basis for interesting personal narratives.

There are also many stories to be written about concrete actions that can be taken to reduce the vulnerability of certain groups, such as creating and maintaining clearly marked pedestrian crossings, building bridges for pedestrians or re-

minding pedestrians to put down their smartphones and pay attention to where they are walking.

Stories like those in the examples below incorporate a strong human-interest element, as they feature individuals who have in some way been vulnerable. Pay particular attention to “Right to walk is right to health” (*The Hindu*), which focuses on pedestrians and the lack of adequate pavements in India. The reporter linked the direct and indirect health benefits of walking.

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### EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [Traffic accidents are 'biggest killer of young people worldwide', report says, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [South Africa's lack of road safety forces children to run the gauntlet, \*The Guardian\*](#)
- [Right to walk is right to health, \*The Hindu\*](#)
- [Nine out of 10 parents move child out of booster seat too soon, study finds, \*The Washington Post\*](#)



## STORY ANGLE 2: INTEREST GROUPS AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS CAN BRING A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO FAMILIAR PROBLEMS.

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Advocacy organizations often do a good job in highlighting the special concerns of constituent groups, such as older drivers or bicycle commuters in urban areas. The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety ([www.roadsafetyngos.org](http://www.roadsafetyngos.org)) counts 140 member organizations in 90 countries. These organizations can be valuable resources for journalists around the world; their activities range from providing support to victims and their families and advocating for road users rights to promoting safety initiatives. In order to be prepared for future stories on road safety, you should be aware of the key road safety NGOs in your city or country and what type of information you can get from them.

*You should be aware  
of the key road safety NGOs  
in your city or country.*

Here is an example of what we are talking about: Road safety experts generally agree that stricter road safety law enforcement is key to changing behaviour, yet politicians often prefer to turn a blind eye to common infractions, considering that strict enforcement of, say, seat-belt laws would be unpopular with motorists and could cost them in the next elections. But are people really against strict enforcement of road safety laws?

An NGO working on road safety in Turkey decided to answer this question by asking road users directly how they felt about changing the current law and setting higher fines for people who do not wear seat-belts. The results were surprising: 85% of those polled supported increased penalties for not wearing seat-belts. As one would expect, the Turkish media jumped on the story.

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### EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [We are not afraid of dying, but of getting fined, \*Zaman\*](#)
- [Safety experts to pedestrians: Put the Smartphone down and pay attention, \*The Washington Post\*](#)
- [China pushing child safety seats to reduce accident toll, \*Bloomberg News\*](#)





# ROAD SAFETY AND LEGISLATION

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When it comes to changing risky behaviour, legislation can be an effective tool to reduce injuries and fatalities. For a journalist interested in solutions, writing about legislation and law enforcement is yet another approach.

If you are willing to dig a bit into the many resources that are available, stories on road safety legislation can be exciting and challenging journalistic projects. They can be timely pieces that contribute to the debate and clarify what must be changed, how and why. Road safety stories with a focus on legislation can:

- reflect a debate and contribute to it by encouraging public discussion and participation;
- help readers and road users to follow and understand the debate on a bill that will directly affect them; and
- give a voice to people who are not given the opportunity to have a say in the debate, such as advocates or representative of groups of road users.

We found a good example of how these types of stories can contribute to the debate in Australia, where the alarmingly high rate of young drivers in road traffic crashes became part of the national conversation, in part thanks to the media. Between 2004 and 2008, the introduction of

graduated driver licensing restrictions for novice drivers became a prominent topic in news coverage and generated hundreds of articles around the pros and cons of each proposed measure.

Almost any story on a road incident is an opportunity to discuss the relevant legislation. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that this can be a moving target, as laws, law enforcement strategies and safety technology change and evolve. For example, a few years ago, a good story on a fatal crash involving drink-driving would typically have included a mention of the maximum blood alcohol concentration allowed by law and the enforcement strategy adopted by the government. These days, a story on the same subject could include reference to new technologies, such as ignition interlocks, which are increasingly being required by law.

Several types of story offer the opportunity for exploring in depth or simply mentioning traffic or road safety legislation. In the following pages, you will find some suggestions for including information on traffic legislation in your stories. The links to examples of relevant road safety stories written by reporters around the world are active in the online version of the guide.

# STORIES TRIGGERED BY ROAD TRAFFIC CRASHES

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Imagine you are doing a story on a road crash in which one or more people have been killed. As you try to understand what happened, you have an opportunity to look at any relevant legislation and consider why it was – or was not – effective and how it might be improved. For example, in Brazil, a 3-year-old child riding in a taxi was killed because he wasn't in a child seat. While giving appropriate coverage to the tragic loss of life, several news stories asked why Brazil's legislation excluded taxis from the mandatory use of child restraints. Unfortunately, none of the stories explored how this measure is implemented in other countries where child restraints are mandatory in taxis.

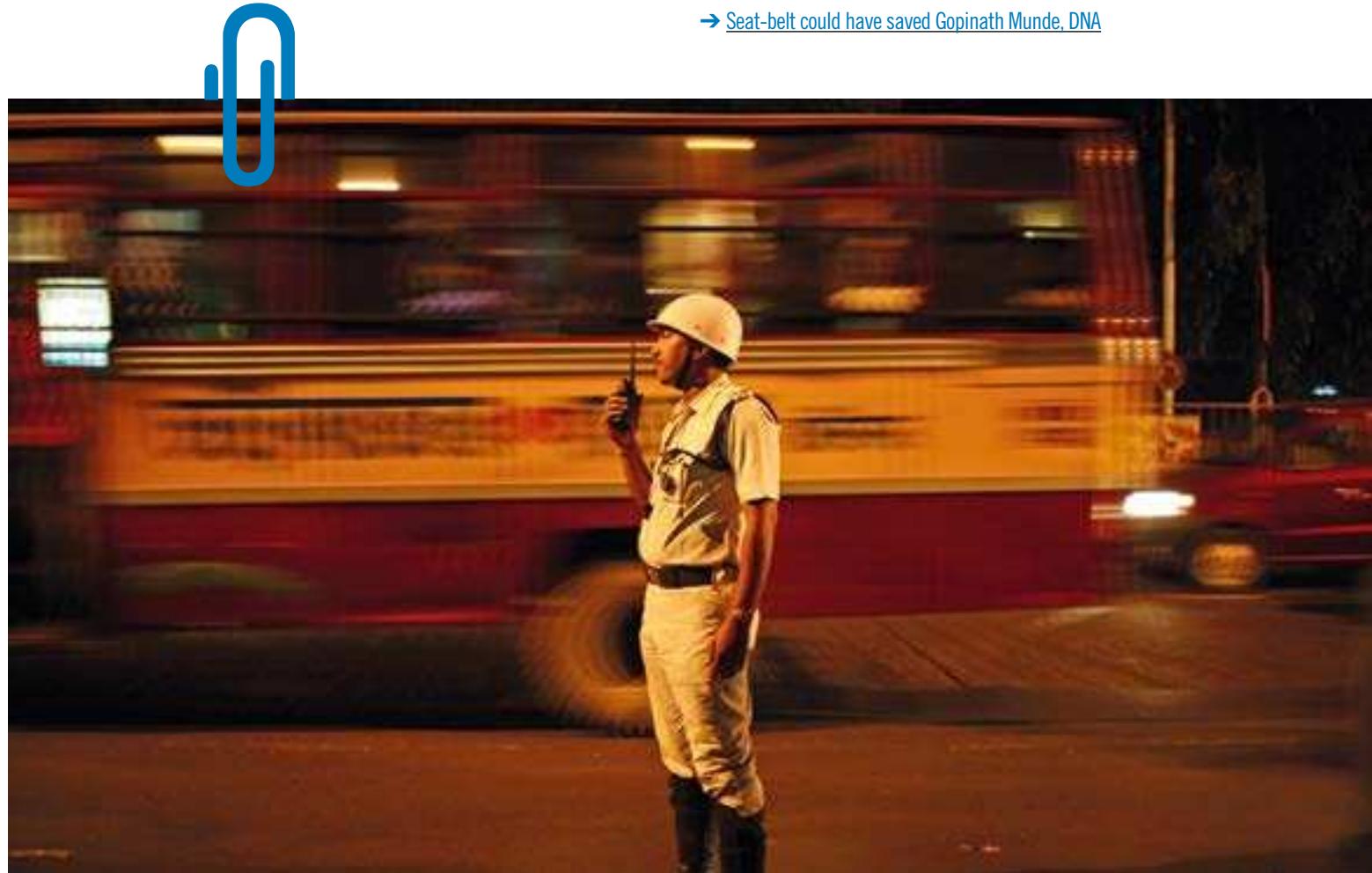
Another example comes from India, where in June 2014 a prominent Government official was killed in a car crash. Gopinath Munde, Rural Development Minister, was seated in the back seat of his vehicle and was not wearing a seat-belt. Most of the headlines on the tragedy focused on the fact that Mr Munde was not wearing a seat-belt rather than on his public persona or other details of the crash. Some stories used the opportunity to ask why rear seat-belt wearing is not mandatory under the India Motor Vehicle Act and why law enforcement in general is so poor in the country, as in the story in the box.

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## EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

→ [Children's safety lacks monitoring, \*O Dia Rio\* \(Portuguese\)](#)

→ [Seat-belt could have saved Gopinath Munde, DNA](#)



# STORIES PEGGED TO NEW PROPOSALS OR LEGISLATIVE BILLS

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Too often dismissed by reporters and editors as humdrum stories that will probably end up buried deep inside the paper, stories about new legislative initiatives can, with a little effort, be turned into highly readable, informative pieces. These articles help to frame the debate and improve readers' understanding of the legislative process and how the new measures will directly affect them. For example, Joe Freeman of *The Phnom Penh Post* turned a story on the licencing system in Cambodia into a lively piece by placing himself in the driver's seat and trying to get local certification.

*Stories about new legislative initiatives can, with a little effort, be turned into highly readable, informative pieces.*

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## EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [Traffic law almost at hand, \*The Phnom Penh Post\*](#)
- [Bring stringent norms in motor bill to check road death, \*Business Standard\*](#)
- [Road safety: the truths are out there, \*Business Standard\*](#)
- [In the driver's seat: the road to certification, \*The Phnom Penh Post\*](#)

Stories can also refer to legislation as part of an overall analysis of road safety, as in the example below. But even the best laws are meaningless if they are not enforced. Thus, law enforcement is another critical topic for journalists, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where lack of resources, corruption and deeply ingrained habits of lax enforcement all contribute to escalating death rates. As a journalist, you can investigate and expose corruption, make the case for putting more resources into professional law enforcement and help the public understand that competent law enforcement is in their best interests. You can also shed light on the challenges facing law enforcement agencies, as in the stories below.

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## EXAMPLES OF RELATED STORIES

- [Children's safety lacks monitoring, \*O Dia Rio\*](#)
- [Traffic law lack foot soldiers, \*The Phnom Penh Post\*](#)
- [Full community support for safety belts, \*Memurlar\*](#)
- [Americans left at risk as transportation safety fixes are delayed, \*The Washington Post\*](#)
- [Road to perdition, \*Live Mint and The Wall Street Journal\*](#)







# SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Good sources and resources are critical to understanding and reporting on road safety. Facts and data can add depth and credibility to your stories. The following list of resources includes reports, technical publications and the websites of road safety organizations. It is not comprehensive, but it might help reporters to find the right resources and sources for a variety of angles.

Please note that the links are active in the online PDF version of this guide.

For more information and facts, we invite you to visit our online Road Safety Media Brief, which includes fact sheets about the main risk factors, common myths in reporting on road safety and frequently asked questions on road safety.

## BY PUBLICATION

- [Global status report on road safety \(GSRRS\), 2013](#) (WHO)
- [Global status report on road safety, 2009](#) (WHO)
- [World report on road traffic injury prevention, 2004](#) (WHO)
- [World Health Statistics, 2014](#) (Global Health Observatory, WHO)
- [Annual report of the International Road Traffic and Accident Database \(IRTAD\), 2013](#) (OECD)
- [Annual report of the United Nation Economic Commission for Europe, 2013](#)
- [World road statistic report, 2014](#) (International Road Federation)

## BY TOPIC

### COST OF ROAD CRASHES AND ROAD SAFETY MEASURES

- [Cost–benefit analysis of road safety measures \(SWOV\)](#)
- [Crash costing \(International Road Assessment Programme\)](#)
- [Road crash cost \(fact sheet, SWOV\)](#)
- [Road safety annual report \(International Road Traffic and Accident Database\)](#)

### DATA ON FATALITIES AND INJURIES DUE TO ROAD TRAFFIC CRASHES

#### → Global data

- [Comparison of road traffic deaths with those from other diseases \(Global Health Observatory, WHO\)](#)
- [Injury accidents per 100 million vehicle–km \(International Road Federation\)](#)
- [International Road Traffic and Accident Database \(OECD\)](#)
- [Methodology for data collection, Global status report on road safety, 2013 \(WHO\)](#)
- [Road traffic fatalities per 100 000 population \(WHO\)](#)
- [Road traffic fatalities per 10 000 vehicles \(OECD\)](#)
- [Statistical annexes, World report on road traffic injury prevention, 2004 \(WHO\)](#)
- [Underreporting \(OECD\)](#)

#### → Regional data

- [African Region \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)
- [Mortality in Africa: The Share of Road Traffic Fatalities \(African Development Bank\)](#)
- [Eastern Mediterranean Region \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)
- [European Region \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)
- [Eurostat, database of European statistics \(EU\)](#)
- [Inter-American Development Bank](#)
- [Region of the Americas \(WHO\)](#)
- [South-East Asia Region \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)
- [Western Pacific Region \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)

#### → National data

- [Country profiles \(Global status report on road safety, 2013, WHO\)](#)

## International organizations working in the field of road safety

- Amend
- Bloomberg Philanthropies
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: motor vehicle safety
- EMBARQ
- European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
- FIA Foundation
- Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety
- Global Road Safety Partnership
- International Road Federation
- Road Traffic Injuries Research Network
- Safe Kids
- SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research
- Transport Research Board of the National Academies, Transport Research International Documentation database
- United Nations Road Safety Collaboration
- WHO
- World Bank
- YOURS: Youth for Road Safety

## Maps, visuals and audiovisuals

- Infographics (WHO)
- Global Health Observatory (WHO)
- Online library of road safety mass media campaigns (WHO)
- Mr Pedestrian, poster series (WHO)
- Roads Kill map (Pulitzer Centre)
- Road marks, poster series (WHO)
- Too late, poster series (WHO)

## Projects and initiatives

- Bloomberg Philanthropies global road safety programme in nine countries
- Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020
- Global plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020
- Make roads safe: the campaign for global road safety
- More on: Brazil, Cambodia, China, India, Kenya, Mexico, Russian Federation, Turkey, Viet Nam
- Third United Nations global road safety week: children and road safety (May 2015)
- World day of remembrance for road traffic victims (third Sunday of November)

## Related topics

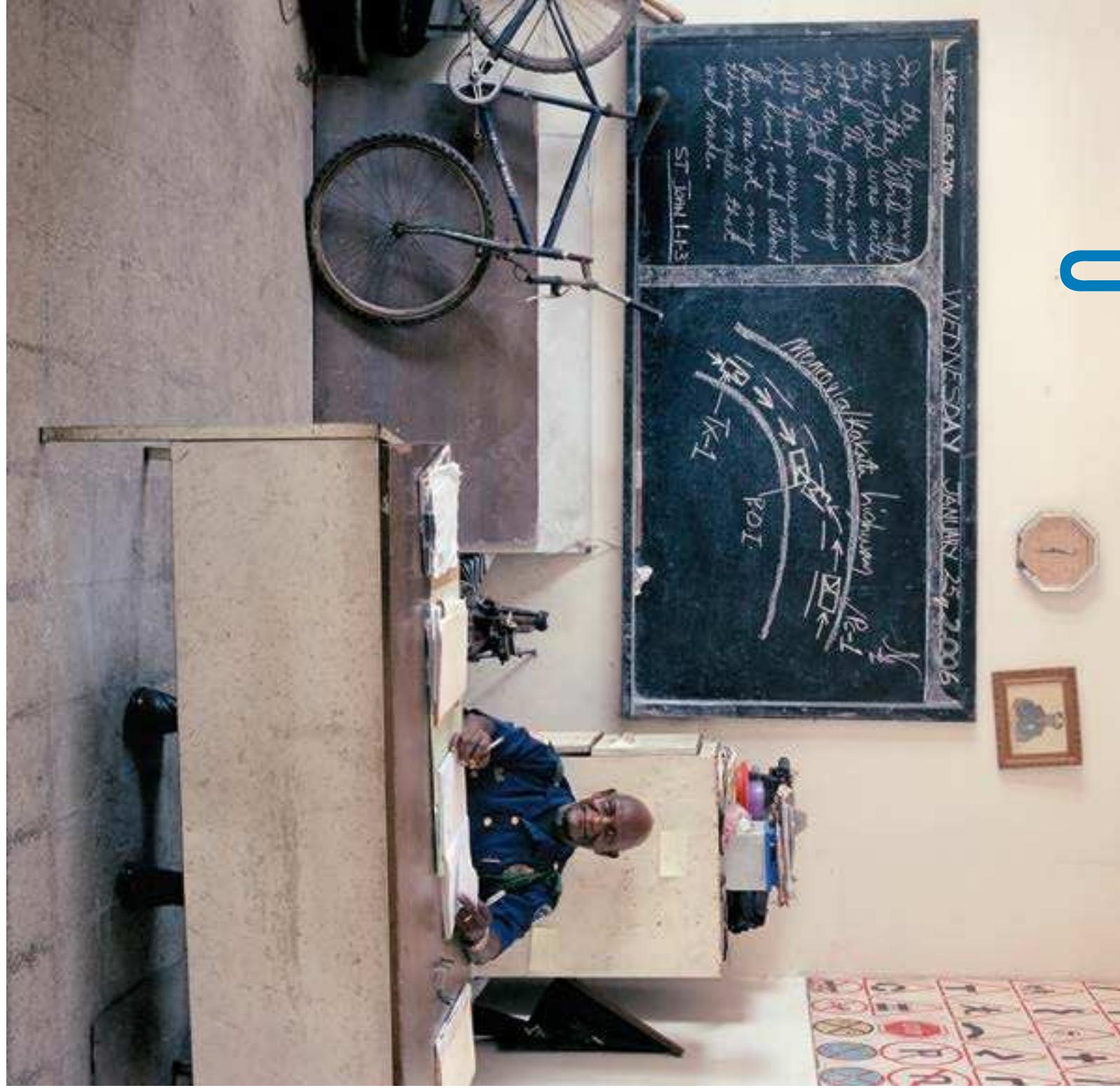
- Alcohol
- Environment and air quality
- Spinal cord injuries
- Youth

## Road safety facts and good practice manuals

- 10 facts on global road safety (WHO)
- Crash types (International Road Assessment Programme)
- Distracted driving (report, WHO)
- Drinking and driving (manual, WHO and partners)
- Fact sheets on a wide range of road safety-related topics (SWOV)
- Helmets (manual, WHO and partners)
- Road safety fact sheet (WHO)
- Risk factors: fact sheets with main scientific evidence on five key risk factors (WHO)
- Risk factors: infographics (WHO)
- Seat-belts and child restraints (manual, WHO and partners)
- Seat belts, airbags and child protection devices (fact sheet, Netherlands Institute for Road Safety Research, SWOV)
- Speed management (manual, WHO and partners)
- Strengthening road safety legislation (manual, WHO)
- The vision zero initiative (Sweden)
- The safe system approach (OECD)
- Use of the mobile phone while driving (fact sheet, SWOV)
- Visibility (fact sheet, WHO)

## Road users

- Bicyclists (International Road Assessment Programme) and Bicycle helmets (fact sheet, SWOV)
- Children going to school (Amend, Africa)
- Children safety (Safe Kids)
- Child protection devices (fact sheet, SWOV)
- Enforcement (toolkit, International Road Assessment Programme)
- Fact sheets on other road users, such as seniors (fact sheets, SWOV)
- First United Nations global road safety week: youth and road safety (April 2007)





# A FINAL NOTE

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We hope you have found this guide useful. Our purpose is to encourage and inspire journalists around the world with ideas, examples and some resources to produce stories that go beyond a road traffic crash. As we have emphasized throughout, what is happening on our roads is not a series of unlucky but somehow inevitable accidents; rather, it is a public health crisis that is taking a catastrophic toll not only on individual victims but also on societies as a whole. It is only when journalists – especially journalists in developing countries, where the toll is highest – understand the true nature of this crisis and draw public attention to it that we will begin to make progress toward reducing the deadly and entirely avoidable carnage on our roads.

*It must become part of every newsroom's DNA.*

But covering road safety is not a “one-and-done” project. This deadly public health crisis will not be solved by a single in-depth road safety project, no matter how excellent or widely read it is. To have a real impact, reporting on road safety must become an ongoing process of consciousness- and public awareness-raising. It must become part of every newsroom’s DNA, especially in the countries where road crashes are most frequent and most likely to be shrugged off as a cost of economic progress. If you are an editor or

reporter in a place where too many people are dying on the roads, you should seize every opportunity – from the fiery crash that kills a dozen people to the more mundane decision by a local governing authority to trim funding for road safety enforcement – to explain that road safety is a major public health crisis that has a solution.

*Your task is to find the right people, ask the right questions and present the story with the urgency it deserves.*

There is no shortage of opportunities and openings to write about road safety. Your task is to find the right people, ask the right questions and present the story with the urgency it deserves.







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