Globally, every three minutes a child is killed in a road crash. Hundreds of others are injured, and many disabled. These traumatic events cause immeasurable grief, suffering and even economic hardship for families. These man made tragedies cost societies precious resources much needed to address other pressing health and development challenges.

The WHO South-East Asia Region has a death rate of 6.9 (per 100,000 population) among children under 18 years of age, caused by road crashes. Of all the regions, the SEA Region ranks third among the group of low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) after the African and the Eastern Mediterranean Regions, as per the 2014 WHO Global Health estimates.

The United Nations Road Safety (UNRS) Week this year is the third of its kind. It seeks to highlight the plight of children on the world’s roads; generate action to better ensure their safety; contribute to achieving the goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020; and promote the inclusion of safe and sustainable transport in the post-2015 development agenda. The centerpiece of the #SaveKidsLives campaign, which is the official campaign in the run-up to the Week, launched in November 2014, is a child declaration developed with input from children around the world. The campaign invites all road safety policy-makers and advocates to “sign it”, “show it”, and “deliver it” to those in charge of road safety in countries and communities during UNRS Week. In line with WHO/HQ 10 strategies, SEARO has aligned its strategies in the following way:

- Control speed;
- Zero tolerance for drinking and driving;
- Use motorcycle and bicycle helmets;
- Use seat belts and safety seat for children inside vehicles;
- Improve children’s ability to see and to be seen;
- Enhance road infrastructure with the focus on safety;
- Adapt vehicle design to contribute to the safety of children both inside and outside;
• Take specific measures to reduce risks for young drivers;
• Provide improved post-crash care recognizing the specific and different needs of children;
• Ensure supervision of young children on and around the road.

These strategies are best known for keeping children safe on the road. If implemented by all countries, they would help save five million lives and achieve the goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020. They would also make a significant contribution towards creating more vibrant and liveable communities and attaining safe and sustainable transport.

Governments, international agencies, civil society organizations and private companies are encouraged to plan and host events between 4 and 10 May 2015 to mark the Third UNRS Week. It is our hope that the observation of the Third UNRS Week will promote the sharing of knowledge and a greater commitment to road safety. We believe that collaboration between all relevant stakeholders and partners will lead to better care and support for safety of children and other road users, a reduction in the number of future victims, and improvement in road safety globally, regionally, nationally and locally.

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