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A regular series of notes highlighting recent lessons emerging from the operational and analytical program of the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC).

The Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011 – 2020: Lessons from Argentina

by Veronica Raffo and Tony Bliss

Road Safety as a Development Priority

Every year, around 1.3 million people die and millions are seriously injured on the world's roads. These disastrous outcomes will worsen with the growing rate of car ownership. For low and middle-income countries, the sheer number, scale, and cost of these tragedies make road safety a development priority. Over 90 percent of the world's road fatalities occur in developing countries, which have only 48 percent of the world's registered vehicles. Estimates of the total cost of traffic injuries are between 1 and 3 percent of total Gross National Product (GNP). A 2003 World Bank analysis estimated that, between 2000 and 2020, the road crash fatality rate in Latin America and the Caribbean will increase by about 50 percent, to the highest regional fatality rate in the world (31 deaths per 100,000), unless road safety efforts are intensified and new measures are introduced.

In response to this public health crisis, the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 sets an ambitious goal to stabilize and then reduce by half the predicted level of traffic fatalities in low and middle-income countries by 2020. This goal should save around 5 million lives, avoid 50 million serious injuries, and provide an economic benefit of more than US\$3 trillion. Impacts on this scale will enhance country and regional development opportunities. In line with this goal, the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 identified five priorities: (i) road safety



management capacity, (ii) infrastructure safety, (iii) vehicle safety, (iv) road user behavior, and (v) post-crash care. This integrated development perspective is also reflected in the World Bank's new transport sector business strategy.

Improving Road Safety

On World Health Day in 2004, the Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued the joint World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention. The report's strategic initiatives to improve road safety include:

- Identify a lead agency in government to guide the national road traffic safety effort.
- Assess the problem, policies, and institutional settings relating to road traffic injury and the capacity for road traffic injury prevention.
- Prepare a national road safety strategy and plan of action.

- Allocate financial and human resources to address the problem.
- Implement specific actions to prevent road traffic crashes, minimize injuries and their consequences and evaluate the impact of these actions.
- Support the development of national capacity and international cooperation.

Implementing these recommendations require institutional strengthening initiatives that are properly sequenced and adjusted to the country's absorptive and learning capacity. The challenge is to accelerate the shift from weak to strong institutional management capacity and benefit from lessons learned. The Bank's results oriented Safe System approach encourages governments to develop such a systematic approach (see Box 1).

In its application of the new guidelines, the Argentina Road Safety Project demonstrates some innovative features that can usefully guide the design and implementation of transformative road safety investment projects aimed at achieving sustainable improvements in results.

Empower the Lead Agency

The National Road Safety Agency (Agencia Nacional de Seguridad Vial, ANSV) was envisioned as the lead agency in the Federal Agreement on Traffic and Road Safety between the federal government, the provinces, and the City of Buenos Aires. The federal government's decision to empower and resource the ANSV confirmed the agency's "ownership" of the nation's road safety and its management of targeted partnerships. The project addressed the ANSV's roles and responsibilities in a complex federal system and implement measures that could legitimate it with key partners.



Box 1: The Safe System Approach

Recommendations of the Safe System approach include:

- Address all elements of the road traffic system in an integrated way.
- Emphasize the reduction of death and long-term injury rather than the prevention of crashes.
- Accept that road users will remain fallible and crashes will occur.
- Manage the transfer of crash energy to ensure that road users are not exposed to crash forces likely to result in death or serious injury.
- Accentuate the shared and accountable responsibility of designers and users of the road network for achieving road safety results.
- Demand equity in addressing the safety needs of both motorized and non-motorized users.
- Align with other sustainable development goals and seek co-benefits such as improved local air quality, greenhouse gas reduction, energy security, poverty reduction, social inclusiveness and occupational health and safety.
- Strengthen all elements of the road safety management system, especially institutional management functions.

The challenge for the ANSV was to exercise its powers and achieve its mission within a federal framework that provided for significant provincial and local government autonomy. ANSV's response to this challenge included national registry systems for driver's licenses, traffic records, and infractions. The federal role was institutionalized and the ANSV's ownership of road safety issues was cemented in positive partnerships with provincial and local governments.

Collaborate and Partner with the Health Sector

The project was prepared as a collaborative effort and partnership between the transport and health sector teams in the Argentina World Bank Country Office and their counterparts in the relevant government agencies. This partnership deepened the understanding of road deaths and injuries as a public health priority and led to more effective and efficient data management initiatives. The partnership improved emergency response capacity by

a regional emergency network with response training, assessment of trauma capabilities, and emergency care. In addition, a new data collection structure improved the reporting of deaths and injuries by health centers and hospitals. The collaboration also resulted in the use of more innovative evaluation tools to build the business case for the project, with benefits expressed in terms of health gains (expressed in terms of monetized healthy life years saved) and willingness to pay for 'statistical' lives saved (expressed in GDP terms).

Establish a Road Safety Observatory

To build the results management platform, the project invested in road safety monitoring systems and analysis tools in the National Road Safety Observatory and related interventions in demonstration corridors. The Observatory established a new data collection system for road crashes. Surveys of seat belt usage, lights, helmet usage, and distractive factors will provide baseline data and monitor progress in reducing road traffic injuries and fatalities. The Observatory has developed a close partnership with the International Road Traffic Accident Database Group (IRTAD) through a twinning program with its Spanish road agency counterpart, the Dirección General de Tráfico (DGT). IRTAD is now reporting and providing global access to provisional data from Argentina.

Target Police Engagement

A crucial aspect of the ANSV's powers concerned enforcement of traffic safety laws. Legal reforms assigned to the ANSV the responsibility to promote and coordinate traffic control and supervision of police and security forces at the federal, provincial, and city levels. On national highways, provincial roads, and urban streets, ANSV cooperates with the agencies with jurisdiction for traffic safety enforcement. In all cases, security forces and police are committed to communicating details of any road crash to the ANSV.

This new institutional arrangement empowered the ANSV to take a strong leadership role, set the scene for a comprehensive delivery of road safety enforcement services, and build a good reputation and trust with civil society. ANSV's control and surveillance unit, distinctively branded for high visibility, partnered with designated law enforcement agencies, and created a unique deterrence capability with a transparently managed, funded, and targeted approach to enforcement. With its police partners, ANSV also developed and implemented road safety campaigns, targeting speeding, drunk driving, and failure to use safety belts and helmets. The campaigns were launched at high profile media events and complemented by extensive advertising.



Engage Provincial and Local Governments, NGOs, and the Private Sector

The project's inclusive approach delivers road safety interventions in the demonstration corridors and elsewhere. A number of initiatives are proving to be highly effective in developing a unified approach, a sense of shared responsibility, and a strong commitment to achieving the ANSV's mission and ensuring its success as a lead agency. Funding and other support encourage NGOs and the private sector to participate. An incentive fund catalyzes provincial and municipal engagement in the delivery of the strategy. As a result, road safety advocacy efforts have been strengthened and victims groups in particular have become more engaged in working with government partners to improve safety outcomes.

The incentive fund brings the issue of road safety to the forefront of provincial and municipal government agendas. It has financed local strategic plans, mass media campaigns, and low-cost infrastructure improvements. Its output-based funding ensures a fast and responsive disbursement to provincial and local governments. This creates appropriate incentives for all jurisdictions to engage quickly in support of a country-wide implementation of ANSV's strategy. New and inclusive initiatives include the creation of an ANSV consultative committee representing nearly 100 NGOs, to give advice and contribute to the improvement of ANSV's internal work and proposed public policies. Their strong commitment to improved road safety is reflected in their concerts, radio and TV awareness campaigns, seminars, and workshops.

Develop Global and Regional Knowledge Partnerships

To assist the development of the National Road Safety Observatory, the project takes advantage of global and regional knowledge partnerships. The IRTAD, in partnership with the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility (GRSF),

supports a twinning opportunity between its Spanish member agencies and agency partners in Argentina to provide data management services. Similar initiatives with the International Road Policing Organization (RoadPOL) and the International Road Assessment Programme (IRAP) also support the law enforcement agencies and enhance safety measures in the demonstration corridors.

Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead

The project is in its third year of implementation and is making promising progress. Between 2008 and 2010, fatalities from road crashes have decreased by almost 12 percent, and deaths per 100,000 registered vehicles did so by 22 percent (despite a 9 percent increase in the number of registered cars). As the lead agency, the ANSV contributed to saving an estimated 2,034 lives between 2008 and 2010. During the same period, the use of seat belts and helmets increased by 57 percent and 65 percent, respectively, and the number of positive control tests for drinking alcohol while driving declined by 22 percent.

The project's design and implementation are already providing some valuable lessons learned. To begin, the project adapted the World Bank's guidelines to Argentina's unique circumstances and the capacity of its road safety management system. In addition, ensuring the correct sequencing of initiatives and the timely creation of the ANSV enabled the strategies to be owned, directed, and firmly grounded in well-resourced partnerships and a performance management framework. The project also recognized the importance of empowering and funding the ANSV to manage the inevitable complexity of national road safety, and engaging traffic safety police to address the historical mistrust of the police. This facilitated the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and community acceptance.

Well-focused national leadership and supporting resources can catalyze effective partnership engagement with provincial and local governments, NGOs, and the private sector to achieve consensus on desired results and the measures to achieve them. In the case of Argentina, the Incentive Fund has proved to be a powerful innovation that

allows the ANSV to engage in a purposeful way with a wide body of partners and to legitimate its role with lower tiers of government and the community at the more 'grass roots' level. Finally, the project stressed the value of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to shape the ANSV's results focus.

At a supranational level, this project shows that a South-South dialogue and action on a regional basis can be stimulated when best practice measures are taken and given high visibility. The Argentina Road Safety Project has created interest in other Latin American countries facing the challenges of creating a lead agency to manage their national road safety effort. It has also spurred action to create a Regional Road Safety Observatory and its national development process in partnership with the IRTAD Group and its Spanish counterparts is serving as a model to assist the related development of regional protocols.

The successful delivery of both phases of the project will complete the "establishment phase" of a long-term investment strategy and set the scene for the



"growth phase," during which time sufficient capacity will manage a sustained and considerably scaled-up program of investment across the nation. At that stage, Argentina should reasonably be expected to achieve and sustain safety results approaching those of the better performing high-income countries. The benefits of such a strategy will far outweigh the costs of implementation—and the seeds for such success will be found in the current project.

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