

Improving pedestrian road safety in Uganda: A call for Action.



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Executive Summary

Introduction: In Uganda today, pedestrians are the largest group of road users killed accounting for 34.3% (1,258) of the road traffic deaths. There is limited information on pedestrian road safety measures and the challenges that affect their implementation in Uganda. We explored the implementation processes of pedestrian road safety measures to understand why the problem has persisted despite interventions.

Approach: The study involved a desk review of road safety policy, regulatory documents, and reports. We supplemented the review with 14 key informant interviews and 4 focus group discussions. Participants were drawn from various agencies and stakeholders responsible for road safety. In total, we collected and analyzed data on the design, implementation, and evaluation of pedestrian safety interventions from 25 documents.

Findings: Uganda had a Non-Motorized Transport Policy whose implementation had been inadequate. Roads were prioritized for vehicles over pedestrians. The key programmatic challenges in the implementation of policies and the pedestrian road safety measures included; inadequate funds, lack of political support; and lack of stakeholder collaboration. We also noted that no attention was paid to monitoring and evaluation of pedestrian road safety interventions.

Conclusion: The research revealed gaps in the implementation process of pedestrian road safety measures in Uganda

Recommendation: Addressing the implementation challenges of the pedestrian road safety policy and road safety measures requires collaborative efforts all levels, political commitment, and budgetary support.

Introduction

A recent report by the Uganda Traffic Police showed that more than 3,663 deaths and up to 8,370 injuries resulting in hospital admission occurred on the roads in 2020 (Uganda Police, 2020). In Uganda today, pedestrians are the largest group of road users killed accounting for 34.3% (1,258) of road traffic deaths. Moreover, the burden is more pronounced among child pedestrians (Uganda Police, 2020). There have been no significant reductions in pedestrian road traffic death from 2013 to date. The number is expected to increase if no road safety measures are put in place to reduce the exposure to unsafe roads. Pedestrian crashes occur when they cross at unsafe spots or when drivers avoid collision and end up hitting pedestrians.

Uganda has not made progress in achieving global targets in pedestrian road traffic injury reduction. This is because majority of the roads were designed and constructed without considering the needs of pedestrians. We also see that there are inadequate walking and safe crossings for pedestrians. The existing pedestrian walkways are encroached on by motorists and vendors. Because of the burden and the challenges of road safety, there is pressure for Uganda to address the problem of road traffic crashes with special attention given to pedestrians (World Health Organisation, 2018). Stimulating country action to address the problem at all levels requires an understanding of the road safety policies and intervention implementation challenges. This study explored the implementation processes of pedestrian road safety measures in Uganda to understand why the problem has persisted despite interventions.

Approaches

We conducted a qualitative study in 2018 that involved a desk review of road safety policy, regulatory documents, and reports. We supplemented the review with 14 key informant interviews and 4 focus group discussions. Participants were drawn from various agencies and stakeholders responsible for road safety. In total, we collected and analyzed data on the design, implementation, and evaluation of pedestrian road safety measures from 25 documents. Qualitative thematic content analysis was done using Atlas. ti 7 software.

Results

The decision to implement pedestrian road safety measures were based on public demand following the occurrence of many pedestrian crashes at a particular spot and the presence of large pedestrian numbers in areas like schools, markets, or hospitals.

The major barrier to the implementation of pedestrian road safety measures and policies (e.g. Non-Motorized Transport Policy) in Uganda was the lack of clear dedicated funds in the road fund for road safety activities. Also, funding for road safety measures struggles with competing priorities and issues (e.g. COVID, tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV) that are regarded as serious public health threats.

Road construction ignored pedestrian road safety because priority was given to vehicles over pedestrians. Road safety was a low priority on roads countrywide due to the inadequate political and technical support in lobbying for road safety financing.

There were several stakeholders involved in road safety, but there was a lack of collaboration and lack of community participation which emerged as a challenge in the implementation of pedestrian road safety measures.

Finally, no attention was paid to the monitoring and evaluation of pedestrian road safety measures to see if they worked and how they might be improved. We often report on whether the road safety intervention was implemented, but not on the impact in improving road safety.

Conclusion

The research revealed gaps in the implementation process of pedestrian road safety measures in Uganda. Road construction prioritize vehicles over pedestrian needs. The key programmatic challenges in the implementation of policies and the pedestrian road safety measures included; inadequate funds, inadequate political support; and inadequate stakeholder collaboration. We also noted that no attention was paid to monitoring and evaluating the impact of pedestrian road traffic interventions.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications: Addressing the implementation challenges of the Non-Motorized Transport Policy and pedestrian road safety measures requires collaborative efforts at all levels. If timely measures are not put in place to address pedestrian road traffic deaths and injuries, the problem is expected to increase. This will constrain the already weak health care system that is currently overwhelmed with the recent Corona Virus disease and other infectious diseases e.g. Malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Recommendations:

1. There should be efforts by the Ministry of Works and Transport to use the existing evidence to advocate for the inclusion of pedestrian road safety needs into road planning, design and construction.
 2. The Parliamentary forum for road safety should advocate for road safety to be integrated into national plans and budgets.
 3. Road construction should prioritize pedestrian road safety through the inclusion of safe crossing points and pedestrian walkways in areas with high pedestrian numbers e.g. around schools, markets and hospitals
 4. The Ministry of Works and Transport should develop a multisectoral road safety strategy to coordinate all road safety stakeholders.
 5. Road safety awareness raising and campaigns in combination with legislation and/or police enforcement should be conducted to increase road safety compliance among all road users.
 6. Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of pedestrian road safety measures. This is also relevant for evidence-informed decisions for policy, practice and political buy-in
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References

UGANDA POLICE 2019. Annual Crime Report.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. 2018. Global status report on road safety. Available: https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2018/en/ [Accessed 12 February 2019].

Annexes

Comparison of deaths by road user group 2019 and 2018

Road user category	2019	2020
Driver	194	182
Motor cyclist	1,064	1,146
Pedal cyclist	136	183
Passenger on motor cycle	422	409
Passenger in light omnibus	82	83
Passenger in medium omnibus	8	10
Passenger in heavy omnibus	27	12
Passenger in other vehicles	462	380
Pedestrians	1,485	1,258
Total	3,880	3,663

Source: Uganda Police annual crime report 2020

Figure 41. Fatalities by Road User Category in 2020

