

ADVANCING SAFER ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

With a staggering number of road toll of around 20,000 each year, road safety has emerged as one of the most challenging issues in Bangladesh like many other low and middle income countries. Crash statistics revealed that nearly 65 percent of road traffic fatalities are attributed to vulnerable road users (VRUs)- pedestrians, bicyclists, motor cyclists and users of informal and unsafe motorized and non-motorized transport. Road infrastructure deficiencies are considered to be one of the most significant factors attributable to the predominant crash types. Crashes are so clustered that about 40% of the reported fatal crashes are concentrated on 2% of total highway network. Death rates on Bangladesh highways are up to 10 times higher than that of Australian Highways and Britain's most persistently high risk roads. The safety problems especially for vulnerable road users are greatly compounded by the lack of appropriate facilities. Concerningly, the majority of the highway sections are rated as 2 star or less (out of possible 5 star) as revealed from the results of the iRAP risk assessment of around 1400 kilometers of highways. Significant safety gains can be achieved by implementing affordable road infrastructure measures targeting priority crash types on such high risk highway sections in line with the principles of growing consensus of Safe System approach. This paper discusses the prevalent striking road safety issues and problem characteristics and highlights adverse road environmental factors and deficiencies. The paper in particular focuses on the opportunities for advancing the safer road infrastructure giving priorities on Safe System concept. Importantly future road systems should be developed that would reduce the injury likelihood and crash risks by integrating safety features in all phases of planning, design, construction, appraisal, operation and maintenance of road infrastructure together with increased understanding of correct safety principles and potential intervention options.