

## **A conversation with T. Bella Dinh-Zarr on August 2, 2013 about developing world road safety**

### **Participants**

- T. Bella Dinh-Zarr — Director of Road Safety, FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society
- Cari Tuna — Co-Founder, Good Ventures
- Alexander Berger — Senior Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Josh Rosenberg — Research Analyst, GiveWell

**Note:** This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by T. Bella Dinh-Zarr.

### **Summary**

GiveWell spoke with T. Bella Dinh-Zarr of the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society as part of its shallow investigation of developing world road safety. Conversation topics included: the FIA Foundation's work to improve road safety, other organizations working on road safety issues, and opportunities for new funders in this space.

### **Background on the FIA Foundation**

The FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) Foundation for the Automobile and Society is an international foundation based in London that was established in 2001. It donates about \$7 million per year. Most of its grantmaking is for improving road safety in developing countries, though it makes grants for environmental issues related to transportation as well.

### **The problem: road safety**

Road safety is a major problem in developing countries. Some illustrative facts about the nature of road safety problems are:

- Road traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in children over age 5 around the world. In developing countries, children often must walk miles to school along dangerous roads or ride with parents in places where a motorcycle is the family vehicle.
- Road traffic crashes kill 1.26 million people every year, primarily in developing countries, yet it is largely unrecognized as a public health or development issue.
- Lack of road safety inhibits development; traffic-related deaths and injuries cause a loss of 1-2% of GDP in developing countries due to health costs, missed work time, and lost human capital. Research conducted by the FIA Foundation, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that better road safety would encourage overall development by improving children's access to education, increasing everyone's access to preventive and acute medical care, reducing medical costs related to

road traffic injuries, and reducing the number of injuries and deaths of primary breadwinners.

As more people in developing countries acquire motorcycles and cars, vehicle and road safety will become even more important.

### **The FIA Foundation's activities**

#### *Make Roads Safe*

One of the FIA Foundation's primary campaigns is the Make Roads Safe campaign, which raises public and political awareness about road safety and makes grants to evidence-based projects in order to improve road safety.

#### *Proven, cost-effective distribution programs*

The FIA Foundation funds proven, cost-effective programs that prevent injuries and save lives, such as helmet distribution/education programs, police/enforcement programs, road infrastructure improvements, policy changes within countries, and school zone improvement programs that may include reflective backpack distribution. Reflective backpack distribution programs are targeted at children in developing countries who often walk to school early or late during low light hours.

The FIA Foundation spends about \$1 million per year on helmet distribution and education programs in Cambodia and Vietnam (through the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative). It collaborates on some projects with other philanthropic or corporate donors. But total philanthropic spending on road safety in Cambodia and Vietnam is still only a few million dollars per year, not enough for a public health threat that causes such a large number of deaths and injuries in these countries.

The FIA Foundation also manages, pro bono, with WHO, the Road Safety Fund, which advises and accepts donations from corporations and philanthropies for road safety efforts as part of the Decade of Action for Road Safety. The FIA Foundation is also a donor to the Road Safety Fund.

The FIA Foundation is collaborating with the CDC on evaluations of some of its road safety programs, such as the helmet program. It hopes that doing these evaluations will lead larger aid organizations, such as USAID, to scale up helmet programs in other places.

#### *Low-cost infrastructure projects*

In addition to the International Road Assessment Program (iRAP) described in more detail below, the FIA Foundation supports low-cost infrastructure efforts through Amend (an NGO) to improve road safety, such as placing speed bumps and crosswalks in high-risk school zones. Amend identifies dangerous school zones using police reports and hospital records related to traffic fatalities. Amend is working with several hundred

schools near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Accra, Ghana. It collaborates with the Tanzanian and Ghanaian governments. The FIA Foundation has received preliminary reports suggesting that these programs have been successful.

### *Advocacy*

#### Lobbying governments

The FIA Foundation runs the Road Safety Scholars Program, which trains up-and-coming leaders in developing countries on road safety. Former Road Safety Scholars have risen to prominent leadership positions in their countries and are champions for safe roads in police departments, governments, and prominent NGOs.

The FIA Foundation supports the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative (GHVI), through the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIPF), which was instrumental to a successful lobbying effort that persuaded the Vietnamese government to pass a law requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. Compliance rates were high; within the first year, helmet use rates changed from less than 10% to greater than 90%. Deaths due to motorcycle crashes fell by about 25%, and hospital admittance due to motorcycle crash injuries fell by more than 25%. The FIA Foundation is expanding similar campaigns to other countries such as Cambodia and Thailand, places where Bloomberg Philanthropies is also working.

The FIA Foundation also works to pass seatbelt laws and drunk driving laws. It has worked with the Costa Rican government and auto club to help support the passage of a seatbelt law along with enforcement measures in Costa Rica. It has provided information and materials to a grassroots group called Mothers in Black that persuaded the Guyana government to pass the country's first ever drunk driving law by having mothers of drunk driving victims stand before the Parliament in a silent vigil.

#### UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

After noticing a lack of political capacity to work on road safety issues, the FIA Foundation worked closely with the United Nations (UN) and WHO to make road safety a higher priority, resulting in the declaration of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The Oman Mission to the UN, and later Russian Mission to the UN, along with prominent members of the FIA Foundation's board, especially Rt. Hon. Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, played an important role in establishing the Decade of Action.

About 100 countries co-sponsor or support the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, which focuses on 5 pillars of action:

- Road infrastructure — ensuring that roads are built in a safe manner and that there are adequate crosswalks, safety barriers, and other safe infrastructure design on the roads
- Vehicle safety — ensuring that vehicles are built safely

- Changing behavior — reducing drunk driving, increasing use of seatbelts and helmets
- Post-crash care — reaching and providing medical care for traffic victims as soon as possible after crashes occur
- Capacity building and management — supporting training and management within countries to create capacity for sustainable road safety efforts

The WHO, as the primary agent of the UN, is the FIA Foundation's key partner in guiding the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Though important gains have been made in the first 2 years of the Decade of Action, at the current rate of improvement, the ambitious goals for the Decade cannot be met without more government involvement and wider public awareness of the issue. Road safety is still a neglected issue that is not widely recognized, despite causing more than 1.2 million deaths a year and at least 20 million serious injuries, resulting in devastating effects on people's lives.

### *Road Assessment*

The FIA Foundation collaborates with governments, development banks, and NGOs to improve international road assessment.

It grants about \$1 million per year to the International Road Assessment Program (iRAP), a non-profit composed of engineers who evaluate the quality of roads in 60-70 developing countries and recommend safety improvements to governments. Unfortunately, countries often do not have enough funding to implement iRAP's suggestions, but more foreign aid and philanthropic contributions may help with this problem.

Development banks, such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and others, spend about \$4 billion on infrastructure in the developing world each year. However, the roads that development banks fund are not always safe. For example, the World Bank built a new \$10 million road in Bangladesh, but an independent evaluation found it to be one of the most dangerous roads in the country. The FIA Foundation is a donor to the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility in hopes that future roads are built safely.

### *Vehicle safety*

The FIA Foundation works with car manufacturers to help them meet robust safety requirements for their vehicles. Vehicle safety is an important problem in many developing countries. For example, Brazil will soon pass Germany in the production of cars, but many of its cars have 0-star or 1-star safety ratings

### **Other organizations working on road safety**

### *Private foundations*

Bloomberg Philanthropies is in the midst of a \$125 million, 5-year, 10-country program to improve road safety. It also funds many partners, such as the Global Road Safety Partnership.

### *NGOs*

- Amend — a small NGO that does proven, replicable, cost-effective work to improve road safety. It has strong local contacts in Ghana and Tanzania but will expand to other African countries in the next few years.
- iRAP — works on international road assessment.
- Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIPF) — carries out helmet education and distribution programs, partners with non-profit helmet factory (Pro-tec) which is staffed in part by people who are disabled and produces low cost tropical weight safe helmets. AIPF spearheads the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative.
- Eastern Alliance for Safe Sustainable Transport (EASST) — Eastern European partnership of NGOs and government officials that facilitates cross-border projects on sustainable transport and road safety.
- Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE) — NGO formed by an interdisciplinary group to make the Indian roads safer through training, research, and policy.
- Fundación Gonzalo Rodríguez (FGR) — Uruguayan-based NGO with a focus on road safety for children and vehicle safety.
- Many other NGOs also work on road safety issues and belong to the UN Road Safety Collaboration (organized by WHO), but funding is a concern for all of them because safe roads are not a widely recognized issue publicly or politically.

### *International institutions*

The WHO, World Bank, and other development banks are major international institutions involved in road safety issues, but it is a very small, usually less influential, part of these institutions that work on road safety.

The CDC spends relatively little money on global road safety, but its research significantly influences road safety implementation.

### *Governments*

- Many developing country governments work to improve road safety
- USAID is beginning to show interest in international road safety issues. USAID is in the process of providing a grant to a helmet project in Cambodia led by AIPF.

### *Universities*

- University of Michigan

- Transportation Institute at Texas A&M
- University of California, Berkeley
- Carnegie Mellon
- University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
- Many others in the U.S.

### **Funding opportunities**

Dr. Dinh-Zarr believes that some good road safety funding opportunities that will result in rapid, measurable results for a new donor are to increase funding for NGOs in diverse regions of the world such as: Amend (Africa), AIPF (Asia), IRTE (India), EASST (Eastern Europe), and FGR(Latin America).

A different kind of opportunity is to improve police enforcement of road laws in countries that struggle with corruption. Various organizations work on these kinds of issues, but the most effective at integrating good governance into road safety has been EASST which works in Eastern European countries.

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