

Policy Brief

Child and Adolescent Road Safety

April 2024



Policy Brief: Child and Adolescent Road Safety

Based on the learnings from the Child and Adolescent Road Safety project for Pune district

Drafted under the Child and Adolescent Road Safety project for Pune district by Centre for Environment Education, RISE Infinity Foundation and UNICEF.

April 2024

Centre for Environment Education | RISE Infinity Foundation | UNICEF

Recommended citation:

Centre for Environment Education, RISE Infinity Foundation & UNICEF. (April 2024). *Policy Brief: Child and Adolescent Road Safety*. Pune. India.

Program Context

Road safety for children and adolescents is a serious public health concern in India. In 2010, the Union Cabinet approved the National Road Safety Policy¹ that recognized road accidents as a major public health issue and emphasized that road safety needs to be addressed on a holistic basis. The policy ensured joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments in reducing road accidents, injuries and fatalities, regardless of jurisdiction. The Government of India is also committed to the UN General Assembly Resolution on Improving Global Road Safety with a target to reduce road deaths and serious injuries by 50 per cent by the end of 2030².

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than 40 child lives are being lost per day to road crashes in India. In the five years between 2018 and 2022, road crashes caused the death of 77,386 children and adolescents below 18 years of age. The number of road crash fatalities of children and adolescents below 18 years in India increased by 10.54 per cent in a year, from 14,875 in 2021 to 16,443 in 2022. The following information shows the seriousness of the issue of road crashes, especially for children and adolescents in Pune district:

- Road crash fatalities in the age group below 18 years was 83 for Pune district (*Maharashtra Road Crash Report 2022, Accident Research Cell, Additional Director General of Police (Traffic), Highway Police Maharashtra State*).
- Of the total 343 road crash deaths in all age groups, 33 fatalities occurred near schools/ colleges/ other educational institutions in Pune city, which indicates vulnerability around these premises (*National Crime Records Bureau 2022*).
- Pedestrians constituted 349 fatalities out of total road crash fatalities of 1,619 in all age groups in Pune district (*Maharashtra Road Crash Report 2022, Accident Research Cell, Additional Director General of Police (Traffic), Highway Police Maharashtra State*).
- In 2022, 42 persons were killed in road crashes at pedestrian crossings in Pune City (*National Crime Records Bureau 2022*).
- In 2022, 19 fatalities of two-wheeler riders in road crashes were reported in age group 0-19, in Pune City. (*Vital Strategies data analysis, for Pune City, 2022*).
- Higher vulnerability is indicated in rural areas of Pune district as 923 road crash fatalities were reported in rural areas as against 696 in urban areas (*Maharashtra Road Crash Report 2022, Accident Research Cell, Additional Director General of Police (Traffic), Highway Police Maharashtra State*).

The unavailability of data poses a challenge to discern age-specific vulnerabilities and causality. For example, lack of age-segregated data for two-wheeler fatalities in Pune City makes it difficult to analyse the causes of child and adolescent's deaths. For example, not wearing/ not providing a helmet or lack of an appropriate child restraint system could have led to casualty; however, lack of data will lead to ignoring needs of children for safety on roads.

¹ MoRTH, National Road Safety Policy <https://morth.nic.in/national-road-safety-policy-1>

² One UN vision for road safety. <https://www.un.org/nl/node/98338>

Pilot Intervention in Pune

UNICEF Maharashtra in collaboration with RISE Infinity Foundation (RIF), and knowledge partner Centre for Environment Education (CEE), undertook the project to strengthen child and adolescent road safety in Pune district. The project “Child and Adolescent Road Safety in Pune District through Safe Systems Approach” was initiated under the umbrella of the Pune District Road Safety Committee (DRSC), and in close association with the Pune District Collectorate, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).

Guiding Approach to Strengthening Road Safety

The project was aligned with the integrated “Safe Systems Approach” to road safety, which is recommended by intergovernmental agencies such as the World Bank, WHO, UNICEF and IFRC^{3, 4, 5}. The approach is based on three principles, namely, i) people make mistakes, ii) people are fragile, and iii) the system should be forgiving. ***The safe systems approach takes us away from blaming the driver, and road users, to designing and implementing safer systems, including Safe Roads and Mobility, Safe Speed, Safe Vehicles, Safe Users and Emergency Response.***

“An *integrated* Safe Systems approach emphasises that road safety can not be compromised to achieve other social needs. In this context, road safety should not be approached as a stand-alone issue but as an integrated component of many different policy agendas, including child health, climate action, gender and equity.”⁶ It is a proactive approach emphasising road safety as a shared responsibility within the systems. Hence, the multi-institutional approach is key to improving road safety.

The same approach is applicable towards improving road safety for children and adolescents. Road safety for children is associated with behavioural risk factors for safe users, infrastructure and environment for safe roads, safe vehicle standards and emergency response service in the event of a crash and post-trauma care are equally relevant for the safety of children and adolescents as road users. The behavioural risk factors in road safety are speed, helmet, seat belt, child restraint system (CRS), drink and drive, distracted and dangerous driving, and in the context of adolescents, underage driving, and risk-taking behaviour, which can be influenced by systems design and management.

Project Aims

The aims were to:

1. Understand the status of road safety for children and adolescents in Pune district and the urban areas of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, and key strengths, gaps and opportunities in the efforts towards road safety,

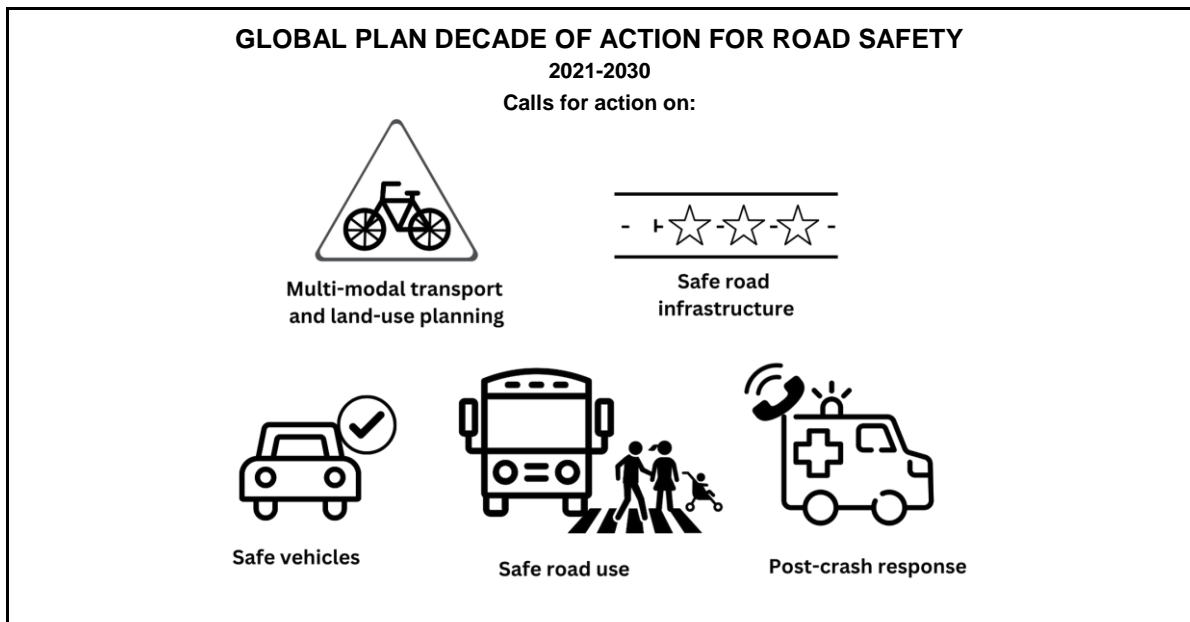
³One UN vision for road safety. <https://www.un.org/en/safety-and-security/road-safety>

⁴ ITF (2022), The Safe System Approach in Action, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at <https://www.roadsafetyfacility.org/publications/safe-system-approach-action>

⁵ The IFRC and Road Safety. <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/who-we-are/ifrc/>

⁶ WHO Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030>

2. Explore potential institutional arrangements at district and municipal levels to strengthen road safety for children and adolescents, considering the safe systems approach,
3. Introduce the safe systems approach to institutional stakeholders through orientation events and developing knowledge and IEC materials,
4. Demonstrate selected pilot actions to strengthen road safety at the school level, and
5. Prepare recommendations for the consideration of the state government and the district administration, based on the evidence and learnings from the pilot project activities.



Activities Undertaken, and Key Outcomes and Outputs

CEE and RIF, as the implementation partners, conducted a range of activities in the period from September 2023 to March 2024, described below with the achievements and outcomes.

1. Visioning Workshop

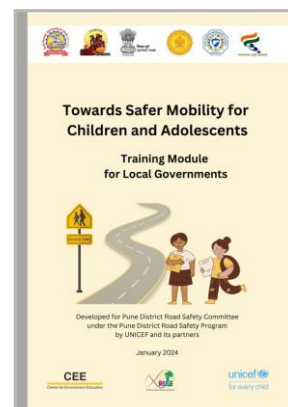
A visioning workshop was convened in November 2023 under the aegis of District Road Safety Committee, which brought together key institutional actors including Pune District administration, Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad municipal corporations, Traffic Police, NHAI, RTA, PMPML, and expert civil society organisations. This was the first such institutional discussion under the Pune DRSC focused on road safety for children and adolescents.

The Chairman of the Pune DRSC acknowledged that the national target of halving road crash fatalities is applicable locally and that the DRSC should aim to achieve (and exceed it) not only for children and adolescents but for all road users.



2. **Assessment of child and adolescent road safety in Pune district**

An assessment of road safety concerns in Pune, was completed, using secondary information, site observations at a few school neighbourhoods, detailed audits at three schools and stakeholder discussions with schools, experts and government officials. It revealed the urgent need for improvement in infrastructure, traffic management, and enforcement of speed limits and rules to address behaviour risk factors, especially in school zones, prioritising those at high-risk locations such as highways, roads with high-speed traffic, and major junctions that may have been addressed so far under any programs for street design or black spot removal.



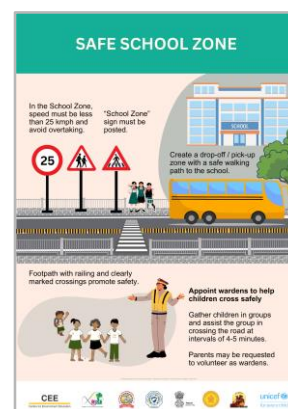
3. **Capacity Building**

A trainer's module on child and adolescent road safety for local government institutions was developed. Workshops were conducted to orient and train the representatives from the departments of Education, Roads, Medical/Health, Traffic Police, RTO, PMPML, experts, civil society organisations and schools in Pune District, Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad. About 84 staff members from these departments and organisations attended the three orientation programmes of 2 days each, conducted in February 2024.

4. **Development of Information Materials**

To disseminate information about child and adolescent road safety, the safe systems approach, and the measures to be implemented in school zones, the following information materials have been developed:

1. Set of 8 posters
2. A booklet about the role of the School Transport Committee
3. A video message by the Municipal Commissioner, PCMC
4. A video on the project aims and activities.



5. **Demonstrations at schools**

Towards the institutionalisation of road safety at the school level, pilot demonstration projects were taken up at 3 schools (1 each in PMC, PCMC and Pune rural). The demonstrations included an orientation of the School Transport Committees, Road Safety Audits of the respective School Zones, submission of the audit reports to the concerned authorities, and implementation of selected measures for improving road safety at these schools.

6. **Identification of key actions to strengthen child and adolescent road safety in Pune district, with measures to be implemented through the DRSC and member departments.**

Project Outputs

- Report of the Visioning Workshop on Child and Adolescent Road Safety in Pune District, November 2023
- Assessment of Child and Adolescent Road Safety in Pune District, January 2024
- Master Trainers' Module on Child and Adolescent Road Safety, February 2024
- IEC materials on Child and Adolescent Road Safety, March 2024
- Audit and assessment reports of 3 demo schools in Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad and Pune rural
- Recommendations/ draft Road Safety Action Plan for Pune District
- Video documentation of the interventions.

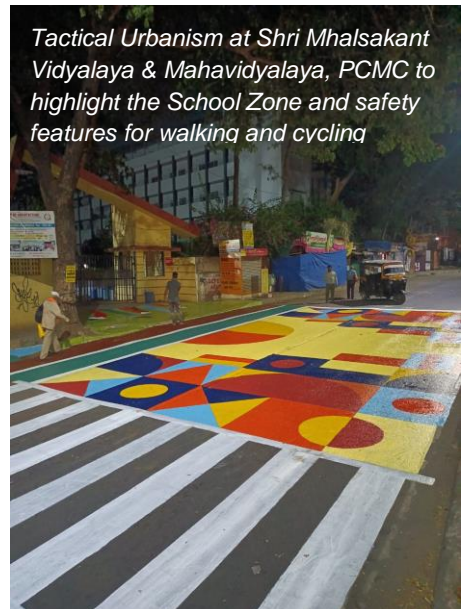
The project outputs are available at this QR code



Interaction with School Transport Committee at Shamrao Shripati Bharate PMC School 161B, Warje, Pune to share outcomes of School Zone Road Safety Audit



Tactical Urbanism at Shri Mhalsakant Vidyalaya & Mahavidyalaya, PCMC to highlight the School Zone and safety features for walking and cycling



Learnings

1. The main learning from the project is that ***educational institutes can be catalysts for engaging families, school staff, communities and institutional stakeholders in child and adolescent road safety, adopting the safe systems approach.***

Outreach and engagement with parents and guardians, and the neighbourhood of the school/ college can be a valuable strategy for implementing safer systems. Such engagement is especially needed in keeping footpaths and cycleways well maintained and free of obstructions for children to use, ensuring the acceptance of safer speeds, and supporting enforcement agencies.

Further, the School Transport Committee can play an important role in spreading awareness about the safe systems approach among parents as teaching traffic rules to young children is not enough to keep them safe, as they do not drive. Young children do not have the same physical and mental awareness and response to traffic situations as adults. Adults have to provide the care needed to keep children safe on roads and the STC can orient parents and caregivers for the same, including through activities such as “cycling and walking school bus”, where parents volunteer to accompany groups of children cycling or walking to school.

2. Age-appropriate educational approaches are needed, for young children and youth.

Teaching the skills of navigation, safe crossing, walking and cycling must be done in an age-appropriate manner, with adults accompanying children till they develop the mental and physical faculties necessary for such activities, depending on the context (e.g. road and traffic conditions). Similarly, innovation may be needed for safely channelising risk-taking behaviour among youth. Traffic Police, RTO officials, colleges and NGOs have been conducting youth engagement on road safety.

There is a need to identify, strengthen (or develop), and disseminate best practices of age-appropriate educational approaches for young children and youth, and training for school staff and caregivers in the Indian context.

3. “Safe systems approach” orientation is essential for institutional stakeholders

Individuals within key government agencies responsible for road safety may not fully appreciate that road safety will not improve just by teaching children to walk and cross safely. Such a belief can be a barrier to the proper implementation of the safe systems approach. Decision-makers and implementing agency staff must be oriented to the “safe systems approach”, focussing on strengthening institutional systems including ensuring safer roads, vehicles, users, enforcement, and post-crash responses, to help achieve the desired outcomes.

Facilitators and Barriers in Strengthening Road Safety for Children and Adolescents

Facilitators

- Key policies and legislations support road safety provisions for children and adolescents, aligned with the safe systems approach, viz. the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act (2019), the National Road Safety Policy, the National Urban Transport Policy, and codes for different categories of roads published by the Indian Road Congress.
- The directions of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety mandate the State Government Lead Agency and the District Road Safety Committee to prepare road safety action plans.
- The institutional mechanism of the District Road Safety Committee, its mandate, and its role in bringing together key actors, make it the appropriate agency for adopting the mandate on road safety for children and adolescents.
- Support and guidance from the leadership of the District Administration, the Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations, and the concerned officials.
- Existing technical expertise, experiences and ongoing work of the municipal corporations, PWD, NHAI etc in street design upgradation, though at limited sites.
- Most schools have a functional School Management Committee, and a School Transport Committee, though the latter may be active only if the school operates school buses.
- Collaboration of active, engaged and highly competent civil society organisations.

Barriers

- The lack of a clear policy and programme at the state level recognising the serious concern about road safety of children and adolescents in Maharashtra and the actions necessary has led to sporadic (though innovative) actions, rather than the mission-scale response needed for the safety of children and adolescents as road users.
- Inadequate awareness about the safe systems approach among institutional actors results in a narrow, ineffective approach focused on teaching traffic rules to children.
- The disconnect in institutional structures, such as the District School Transport Committee operating as an independent entity, rather than working as part of the DRSC, causes uncoordinated actions.
- Resource inadequacy and lack of clarity on the role of enforcement in addressing behaviour risk factors (a prime cause of road crash fatalities) have meant that the Traffic Police is not strongly engaged in road safety planning and implementation by the DRSC.
- Inadequate understanding, and experiences/examples on how to address underage risk-taking behaviour, especially of male youth riding motorized two-wheelers, though this is the demographic segment that shows the highest rate of road crash fatalities.
- Inadequate policy discourse on and demand for subsidised public transport for schools, which results in a large number of drop-offs by parents using private motorized modes, and the consequent increased exposure of children to road risks. The need for strengthening school public transport was highlighted during the visioning workshop and focus group discussions with school representatives in November 2023, as part of this project in Pune.

Opportunities

- The School Health and Wellness Programme under Ayushman Bharat includes road safety as a theme.⁷
- The state government has recently announced an intent to include content on road safety in school textbooks.⁸
- The State Child Rights Commission has recently highlighted the need for all vehicles used to ferry students to and from school, including private buses, vans and rickshaws to follow the guidelines for school transport⁹. While the CRC highlighted the need for arrangements in school vehicles for protection under POCSO, the Commission may also be approached to issue directions for road safety.

These opportunities must be used in alignment with the safe systems approach to road safety and in conjunction with improved physical infrastructure and management of road use by the relevant institutional authorities/ stakeholders.

Way Forward

A clear policy articulation and an action plan at the state- and district level, with evidence-based, and time-bound implementation proposals in a phased manner, is essential to meet the target of halving road crash fatalities by 2030, especially for children and adolescents.

With this target in mind, a draft action plan or recommended actions have been compiled, based on the inputs received through the present project and the experiences of the demonstrations.

The short-, mid- and long-term next steps at district and state levels are suggested as follows:

- Integration
- Scale-up (Pune and Maharashtra)
- Ensuring sustainability

⁷ Operational Guidelines on School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat. Pg 22. https://nhm.gov.in/New_Updates_2018/NHM_Components/RMNCHA/AH/guidelines/Operational_guidelines_on_School_Health_Programme_under_Ayushman_Bharat.pdf

⁸ Bengrut, D (2024, 8 Feb). Road safety to be included in school syllabus from next academic year. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/road-safety-to-be-included-in-school-syllabus-from-next-academic-year-101707329793667.html>

⁹ Smart, P, (2024, 12 Mar). Child Rights commission revives safety guidelines for school buses after molestation incident in Thane. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/child-rights-commission-revives-safety-guidelines-for-school-buses-after-molestation-incident-in-thane-9208597/>

	Short 2024-25, 2025-26	Medium, 2026-27, 27-28, 28-29	Long 2029-30 and onward
Innovation	Develop educational and engagement approaches to support the implementation of the safe systems approach.	Create safe experiences for pedestrians and cycling as modes of school transport.	
Integration	<p>The State Road Safety Council may convene a workshop on child and adolescent road safety and involve the Child Rights Commission and all concerned institutional stakeholders and departments to prepare a state action plan for child road safety (as part of the State Action Plan for Road Safety) to meet the 2030 target.</p> <p>Identify district-specific issues concerning children and adolescents' safety on roads, especially in schools in high-risk locations (2024-25).</p>	Road Depts, PWD, and NHAI to conduct detailed site audits for school zones and implement mitigation measures (2025-2026, 2026-2027).	Youth counselling services and call centres for calming their risk-taking behaviour and engagement in positive actions for road safety.
Scale	<p>Orient all DRSCs on child road safety (2024-2025).</p> <p>Activate and orient all School Transport Committee providing them with a mandate for road safety, in convergence with the School Health and Wellness Programme while continuing the safe systems approach to road safety.</p> <p>Engage with the media to amplify road safety messages and initiatives</p>	Improved and sustained compliance rate for behavioural risk factors; supported with effective enforcement plan, strategic communication for caregivers/ users, and enabling environment with product accessibility (2025-2026, 2026-2027).	Collaborate with healthcare institutions to ensure comprehensive trauma care for injured children.
Sustainability	<p>Budget allocations through the State Road Safety Fund and own sources of the district departments and municipal corporations and incorporating the relevant actions in ongoing work of the departments for implementation.</p> <p>Identify a training institute (such as CIRT or YASHADA) for planning and implementing department-wise training on the safe systems approach to road safety, with a focus on children and adolescents.</p> <p>Identify trauma care centres for children across each district and block to provide timely emergency services.</p> <p>Improve (and integrate) data systems for better analysis considering child and local-specific road safety needs.</p>	<p>Strengthen Maharashtra Emergency Medical Services (MEMS) / Emergency Management and Research Institute (EMRI) for coverage in villages, along highways and high-risk areas with children's perspective.</p> <p>Commission a study on school public transport demand and supply, costs, and feasibility of different options.</p>	<p>Develop child trauma care centres and post-trauma rehabilitation services for children at district and block levels.</p> <p>Strengthen school public transport in cities and villages with appropriate-sized vehicles (buses, vans, six seaters etc).</p>

Notes:

UNICEF Maharashtra Office
215 Atrium, Andheri - Kurla Rd, Hanuman Nagar,
Andheri East, Mumbai 400059

RISE Infinity Foundation
121, East West Industrial Estate Center,
Andheri - Kurla Rd, Safed Pul, Mumbai 400072

Centre for Environment Education
1 Pinewood Apartment,
S.No. 233/1/2, Vidhate Colony, Aundh, Pune 411067