ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY IN SUB SAHARA AFRICA

Road Traffic Accidents (or in short form RTAs) are the leading cause of death and disability among people in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is sad news!

The rate of Road Traffic Injuries (RTIs) is increasing at an alarming rate around the developing world!

The response to this increase, where the burden of Road Traffic Injuries is remarkably high, has been insufficient at best.

Each country in Sub-Saharan Africa has unique resources, and within each country, the different regions, provinces and states have different capacities.

Solutions for improving Road Safety will begin by assessing the capacity of each country and then building according to the resources that are available.

The United Nation Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) presents a template that each country can build upon, with its 5 pillars. The five pillars are:

1. Road Safety Management
2. Safer Roads and Mobility
3. Safer Vehicles
4. Safer Road Users
5. Post Crash Response.

A good example is Namibia, a vast country in South-West Africa, is so far trying to make remarkable gains or achievements in Road Safety generally. The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) recently developed a “Strategy and Policy” on “Emergency Response”
Together with the Motor Vehicle and Accident Fund (MVA Fund), MOHSS outlined several objectives and goals that Namibia set for improving emergency response systems, especially in Road Safety.

This is an important step in ensuring that the right policies are built upon while progressing Namibia’s capacity in executing critical public policies.

The Sub-Saharan Africa Chamber of Commerce has launched a project to work with the Government of Namibia and local stakeholders to improve Road Safety in Namibia.

One area of focus is the Post Crash Response, which MVA Fund and MOHSS have advanced in Namibia. The program, has trained emergency responders and is providing emergency response services across Namibia.

The program covers Pillar 5 of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety and it continues to build on the needs of the country.

In the case of Namibia, the MVA Fund and MOHSS assessed the needs and gaps in emergency response in Namibia.

They developed and motivated a case to invest time money and resources. The MVA Fund’s emergency response and call center is an asset to Namibia and it provides other necessary services outside its scope.

Such programs are a great model to other African countries. The Sub-Saharan Africa Chamber of Commerce is working with the MVA Fund and MOHSS to ensure progress in various aspects of their strategy.

According to observation made by Dr. Alan Ross, Namibia, compared to other countries in the SADC Region and the continent of Africa at large, is on the right track regarding road safety management.

There is still a long way to go, especially if the UN Decade of Action(DoA) objectives are to be achieved-reaching 50% reduction of road accidents within a decade.

His main concern is that road safety is usually regarded as just a transport problem, which should not be the case because it has an impact on so many sectors of the society. For example road safety has impact on:

- Economy of the country
- Health system (health system might sometimes not be able to cope under pressure of so many injured people due to lack of better emergency health faculties.
• Increased poverty (especially if the victim was a breadwinner of the family)

There is an urgent need to invest more in the sensitization of road accidents to the public from a basic level, involving the Ministry of Education and other institutions in publicity programs.

**Need of safer vehicles.**

Namibia should import safer vehicles. “There is a trend shown by vehicle manufacturers. They send safer vehicles to the USA and Europe because they have to meet the standard requirements set in those continents.

How ever less safer vehicles are then dumped in the low and medium income countries, because there are no specific standards” Dr. Alan Ross pointed out.

Governments are advised to start demanding for those standards used in developed countries. Another area which require more serious attention is funding which is always insufficient. Many countries divert traffic fines and other income to fund road safety.