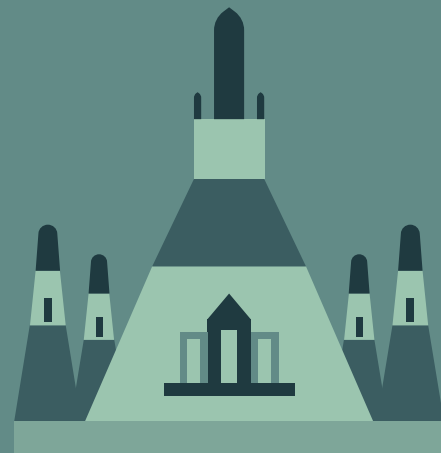


THAILAND

Bangkok



Intervention area: Road safety

City focus: Efforts to reduce speeding and improve traffic safety measures

According to the WHO global status report on road safety 2019, Thailand has one of the 10 highest road traffic fatality rates in the world. It also has the highest rate of motorcycle-related deaths in the world, with almost 22 000 such deaths reported each year (equivalent to 60 deaths a day).ⁱ In Bangkok, the country's capital and largest city, many of these deaths are caused by speeding. National speed limits of 80 km/h exist in built-up areas but enforcing them is a major challenge. Heavy traffic and limited public transport options for many exacerbate the problem.

Over the past few years, significant efforts have been made in Bangkok to reduce speeding. The vision is for the city to lead the rest of the country towards better road safety by championing attempts to reduce speeding and improve traffic safety measures. The Bangkok Metropolitan Authorities (BMA) have tackled the issue through three approaches: policy, enforcement and education.

On legislation, local agencies used a baseline assessment of road safety laws and regulations to understand existing laws and gaps. This work benefitted from good existing data on three road safety risk factors – speed, helmets and seat-belt use – which are currently collected annually from 74 provinces by the Thailand Road Safety Observatory.ⁱⁱ The local agencies then drew from an existing national manual on road speed management to provide practical guidance to provinces and local authorities on new options for improving road safety in the city, such as municipal-level speed restrictions.

The BMA have also worked to improve speed limit enforcement. As a city with neither sufficient equipment to monitor speeds nor sufficient capacity to identify the best places to target speeding drivers, the BMA (with support from the Partnership for Healthy Cities) installed speed-guns to better monitor vehicle speeds throughout the city. The new equipment was introduced to coincide with Songkran (the Thai New Year), when there are more road users and more road incidents.

Collaboration has been essential to this initiative. The BMA have strong partnerships with several agency networks to develop capacity, such as WHO, the Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety, and the Partnership for Healthy Cities. They also worked to involve other local departments – for example the Traffic and Transportation Department was included in the design of infrastructural measures to prevent speeding, such as traffic bollards, and local traffic police help enforce speed limits in certain city areas. Police also worked to improve convictions for drink-driving, and the level of fines for this offence has increased.

In Bangkok and more generally across Thailand, public awareness has been identified as a continuous challenge. Despite high mortality rates, road safety is not perceived as a major issue by the public. However, several strong communication campaigns have been run within the city to raise awareness. These have been integrated with national-level campaigns, maximizing the outreach and impact of the work at both levels. One featured the Prime Minister taking a selfie wearing a seat-belt while in the back seat of his government vehicle.

Overall, while challenges remain, the city is proactively showing the importance of municipal action, the variety of approaches available for cities to follow, and the need to combine policy, enforcement and education to ensure progress.

ⁱ Global status report on road safety 2018. Statistical annex, page 310. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018 (https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2018/en, accessed 16 September 2019).

ⁱⁱ WHO Road safety institutional and legal assessment. New Delhi: World Health Organization; 2015 (<http://www.searo.who.int/thailand/areas/rs-legal-eng11.pdf?ua=1>, accessed 16 September 2019).