Every year, millions of children all over the world die from preventable causes. Injuries and violence are an important contributor. WHO estimates that, in 2002, around 875,000 children under the age of 18 years died as the result of an injury. This places injuries among the leading causes of death in children who survive beyond their first birthday. Aside from the high death toll, injuries during childhood and adolescence are also associated with high morbidity: for every injured child who dies, several thousand more survive with varying degrees of disability. The impact of these injuries on society is tremendous: every day, thousands of families are robbed of their children and thousands of children have to learn to cope with the consequences of their injury, which are often profound and long-lasting.

WHO ACTIVITIES

Child and adolescent injury prevention initiatives

In March 2005, WHO hosted a consultation on child injury prevention during which staff from four WHO headquarters departments, WHO regional offices and the United Nations Children’s Fund, along with 28 other experts from international and regional organizations, planned activities for child and adolescent injury prevention. Participants agreed on four major projects:

- an advocacy document calling for global action
- a ten-year WHO plan of action for child and adolescent injury prevention
- articles for medical and lay publications to raise awareness
- a World report on child and adolescent injury prevention.

The advocacy document, Child and adolescent injury prevention: a global call to action, a joint WHO and United Nations Children’s Fund publication, was launched in November 2005. The WHO plan of action for child and adolescent injury prevention is currently being finalized and is scheduled for launch in early 2006. Its goal is to direct WHO’s
work in this area over the coming ten years. It focuses on six areas: data and measurement; research; prevention; services; capacity development and advocacy (see Box 4.1). It will reinforce the idea that injury prevention is central to child and adolescent health and that, while many challenges to reducing injury exist, there are constructive and effective ways to address child and adolescent injury.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

WHO has strong links with a number of global and regional organizations involved in child and adolescent injury prevention. Over the coming years, these partnerships will play an increasingly important role, as WHO begins to implement its plan of action and develop a world report. Among others, WHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund are increasing their level of active cooperation. Both organizations

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**BOX 4.1 WHO outlines global plan of action for child and adolescent injury prevention**

by Margie Peden, WHO Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention

The WHO plan of action for child and adolescent injury prevention focuses on:

**Data and measurement**
- Facilitate and enhance the collection and analysis of data on child and adolescent injury and violence (including data on mortality, morbidity, health impacts, disability and associated costs) at the country, regional and global levels
- Identify, collate and improve information on risk and protective factors for child and adolescent injury and violence, including the identification of potential points of intervention

**Research**
- Identify key research needs in the field of child and adolescent injury and violence prevention, set an agenda of priorities, and ensure that information on these priorities is available to researchers, governments, donors and other stakeholders
- Promote and foster trials of promising interventions for preventing injury among children and adolescents in high burden regions

**Prevention**
- Support the development of stronger and more effective injury and violence prevention measures and programmes in all countries
- Increase the number of countries with national strategies and programmes for preventing injuries and violence among children and adolescents

**Services for children affected by violence and injuries**
- Promotion of local, national and international services for children affected by injury and violence

**Capacity development**
- Capacity development for data collection and the prevention of child and adolescent injuries and violence

**Advocacy**
- Raise awareness and interest in the impact of child and adolescent injury and violence through the development and circulation of information
- Promote action on child and adolescent injury and violence prevention, principally through the fostering of political will and the generation of resources to address these issues
- Develop and foster international, multisectoral cooperation on injury and violence prevention relating to children and adolescents
recognize that preventing child and adolescent injury is a major challenge, especially in low-income and middle-income countries, and are looking for more effective ways to work together on this issue. Cooperative efforts already exist, particularly at country level and through such initiatives as the United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children. The March 2005 consultation on child and adolescent injury prevention prompted agreement on further joint work. In 2006 a companion document to the jointly published Child and adolescent injury prevention: a global call to action which describes good practices will be released.

**NEXT STEPS**

Over the next three years, WHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund will work together to develop a World report on child and adolescent injury prevention. In line with the World report on violence and health and World report on road traffic injury prevention previously developed by WHO, this report will result from the collaboration of many experts in the area of child and adolescent injuries, and will aim to raise awareness of this problem and stimulate prevention efforts around the globe. The report will present what is known about the magnitude of the problem of child and adolescent injury, consolidate what is understood about risk factors, and examine the evidence on effective intervention strategies. It will conclude by offering a set of recommendations that can be implemented by all nations to effectively reduce various types of injuries to children and adolescents. The document will be important for governments and development agencies around the world.