

Action for Road Safety in Azad Jammu Kashmir

KDF – Briefing Paper 2017

Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation report, every day, more than 500 children and young people around the world under the age of 18 years die from road traffic accidents, and 186,300 people die each year. The rates of road traffic death among children are three times higher in developing than in developed countries. Road traffic injury ranks among the top 4 causes of death for children under five years and is the number 1 killer of young people between the ages of 15-17 years (WHO, 2015).

In Azad Jammu Kashmir, every other day, a person dies due to road traffic collisions (RTC). The AJK Police data on significant road traffic accidents suggests that 698 people died and 3540 were injured from 1492 accidents (2011-14).



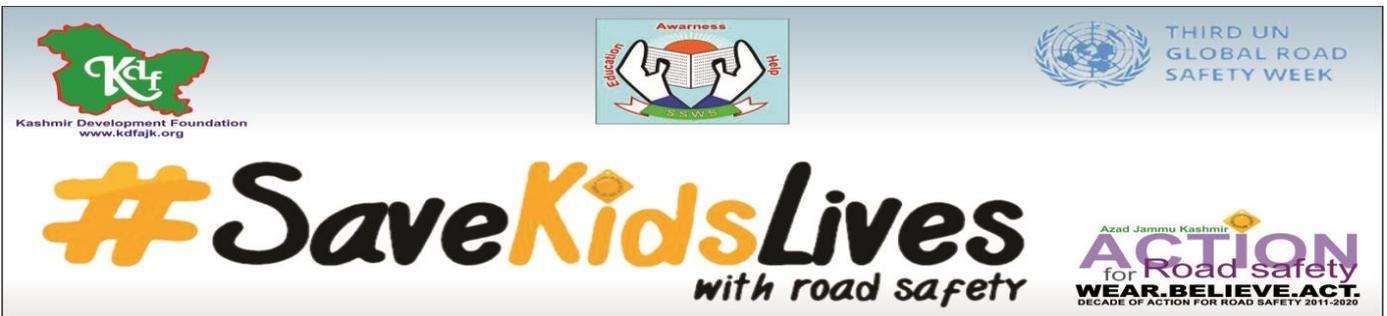
Our data analysis suggests that district Poonch, one of the ten districts of AJK where young motorcyclists often drive without wearing a helmet, was involved in 35% of RTCs.

The increasing trend of risk-taking behaviour among young drivers and motorcyclists, who are driving most of the time without any proper driver's training and licence on poorly constructed and maintained roads in the mountainous region, is a recipe for disaster and a primary concern for road safety in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

There is generally a lack of coordination between civil society and local government departments to raise awareness of road safety and address fundamental issues and causes of road traffic accidents. There is no multi-agency collaboration in data collection and management for recording all types of road traffic collisions and their analysis to ascertain the impact on the victims and people affected by RTCs within AJK. Only AJK Police collects some statistics of major road traffic collisions and looks for fault; there is no independent organisation or multiagency overview and analysis of the RTC data to understand underlying causes such as road design, surface conditions, hazard signs, faulty traffic signals, etc. and make recommendations on systematic changes to prevent similar incidents reoccurring.

The capacity of the AJK health department and voluntary services to respond to accident and emergency calls is minimal. Where it exists, it often does not provide positive outcomes due to a

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lack of emergency planning and preparedness to provide a coordinated response. The emergency treatment and broader health and well-being of the people affected by RTCs and the rehabilitation of disabled victims of road traffic accidents are significant challenges.

Therefore, the [Kashmir Development Foundation](#) (KDF) in partnership with local civil society and youth organisations such as the Students Social Welfare Society (SSWS) has launched the "[Action for Road Safety –Azad Jammu Kashmir](#)" campaign to mark the Third UN Road Safety Week (4-10 May 2015) as part of the [Decade of Action for Road safety 2011-2020](#) to raise awareness and start a meaningful dialogue between civil society and all the key stakeholders to take action for road safety in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir Campaign Mission

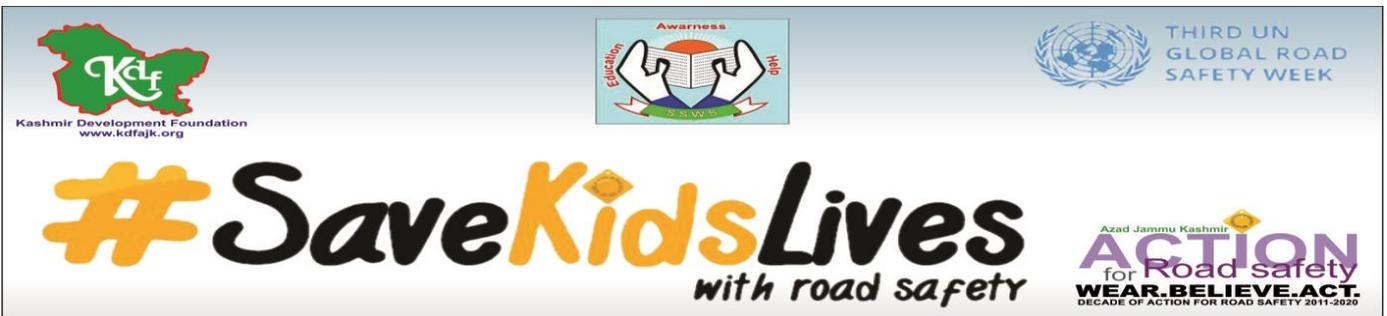
The Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir campaign advances awareness of road safety by encouraging people and institutions to work in partnership for the following objectives:

- 1- To empower the voices of all road users through public policy advocacy and engagement in the development of Azad Jammu Kashmir road safety strategy and action plan for improvements in the road's condition and traffic management systems to reduce the number of injuries and deaths due to road traffic accidents.
- 2- To design, develop and manage road safety education and training programmes.
- 3- —To advance road safety awareness campaigns through community action, using broadcast, print, electronic, and social media, and encouraging motorcyclists to wear helmets and all road users to follow road traffic rules.
- 4- —Establish networks to enhance partnerships between government departments and civil society to support people affected by road traffic accidents.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback from our engagement with a range of civil society stakeholders and critical government officials through meetings, road safety awareness walks and special talks during school assemblies and social media interactions as part of the KDF and SSWS joint pilot project during the Third UN Road Safety Week (4-11 May 2015) in District Poonch, Azad Jammu Kashmir, we recommend that:

- 1- The Azad Government of the State of Jammu Kashmir identify a lead agency in government to work in partnership with all stakeholders to develop AJK road safety strategy and action plan;
- 2- The local administration in each District undertakes a comprehensive road safety risk assessment of all the local, PWD-maintained roads and highways within all districts of AJK to ensure that the road design and surface condition are safe for public use and meet the pre-requisite of ISO 39001:2012, *Road traffic safety (RTS) management systems*



- 3- The Highways and local government departments must ensure that all the roads and highways in AJK are constructed, upgraded and maintained according to the internationally accepted road design and safety standards such as AASHTO Road Design Guidelines
- 4- AJK Traffic and Motorway Police should work in partnership with civil society organisations to raise road safety awareness by strictly implementing licence-checking schemes, developing road traffic safety management plans near schools and colleges, and assisting in establishing driving training schools within each Tehsil and Municipal committee jurisdiction.
- 5- AJK Transport Authority should introduce Vehicle Testing and Roadworthiness Tests for all private, public and goods transport vehicles to ensure safety for all road users and make public liability insurance mandatory for all types of motor transport in AJK.
- 6- —The Health Department must ensure that all Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital staff are appropriately trained and equipped to handle accidents and emergencies and provide rehabilitation services for road traffic injury victims.
- 7- AJK Social Welfare Department should provide appropriate support through care and rehabilitation pathways to enable disabled victims of road traffic injuries in their early recovery and rehabilitation.
- 8- AJK Education department should make road safety awareness a part of the primary school curriculum and all schools and colleges in the public, private and community sectors, as well as religious institutions, to deliver road safety awareness and first aid training for staff and students.

Action for Road Safety Campaign 4th -11 May 2015

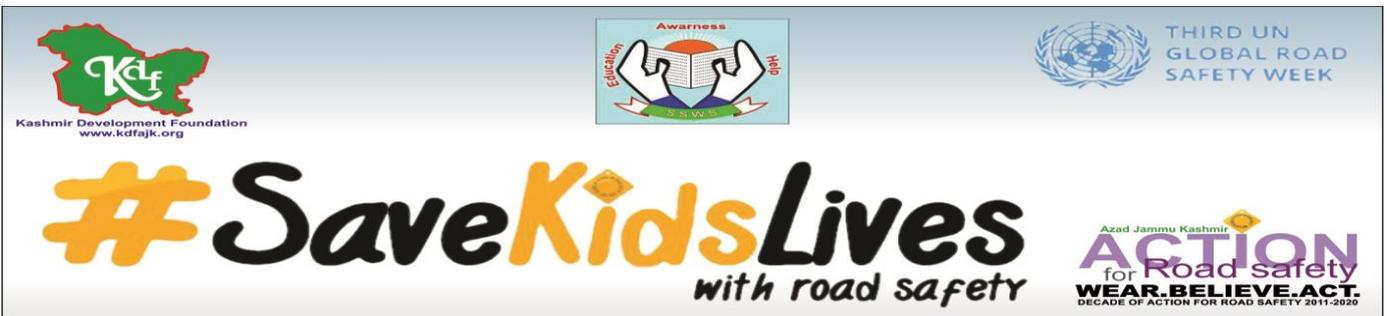


The week-long **Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir** campaign started on 4th May 2015 in the District Poonch; AJK has directly engaged over 850 young people through a range of activities, including special talks during school assemblies within three schools and road safety awareness walks in five towns (Paniola, Thorar, Hajira, Banjosa, Rawalakot).

One hundred fifty people in the District, including local administration officials, the business community, youth groups, representatives of transport workers' unions, press clubs, civil society organisations, religious institutions and social and political activists, signed the [#SaveKidsLives Child Declaration](#) and pledged to support the aims and objectives of the Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir campaign.

During Road Safety Week (4-11 May), a well-coordinated media campaign significantly raised road safety awareness and disseminated road safety messages within all sections of society through

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social media, newspaper adverts, and live interviews in the popular talk show on local FM Radio. Our analysis of the dedicated "[Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir](#)" Facebook page found that we reached 22115 people, and 5407 people liked, commented, shared or clicked on the campaign posts.

Furthermore, the District Mufti recorded an online video message in support of the Action for Road Safety Campaign and wrote a letter to the Imams of 30 Mosques advising them to include Road Safety awareness in their Friday prayer sermons on 8th May 2015. The Deputy Commissioner - Poonch, Assistant Commissioner Hajira, Inspector Traffic Police Rawalakot, Principal P.G Degree College Rawalakot, Degree College Thorar, Headteachers of private colleges and schools, Presidents of all AJK Traders Union and civil society activists also recorded their video messages in support of the campaign that was uploaded and widely shared across social media networks.

This media strategy helped the campaign reach over 23,175 people within two weeks in District Poonch and beyond.

Follow up actions

Our capacity is limited, but we are committed to advancing "Action for Road Safety – Azad Jammu Kashmir through partnership with stakeholders and community voluntary action. In the future, we endeavour to take the following actions to achieve the aims and objectives of our campaign.

- 1- We seek assistance from local, national and international organisations to build our capacity to develop an advancing Road safety awareness project across all the regions of our State.
- 2- Establish networks and partnerships with all key stakeholders to develop a coordinated approach to Road Safety.
- 3—Update all the people and volunteers engaged in this year's campaign on the progress and share relevant information to advance knowledge and awareness of Road safety.

[Kashmir Development Foundation](#) would welcome opportunities for further engagement and partnership with all stakeholders to take action for road safety. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you, **Sardar Aftab Khan - Executive Director**

Kashmir Development Foundation

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