

The steps in defining and implementing a road safety policy



Bamako, Mali, 2001.

■ Step 1: a complete diagnosis

An objective acknowledgment is the necessary preliminary to any action. The greatest care must be taken in this step, which is decisive for the quality of the subsequent co-operative work.

First of all, it seems to be advisable not to completely outsource this step, ie. entrust the diagnosis work to an outside consultancy firm and make no practical contribution to it: it is essential for the authorities in charge of road safety in the country to be heavily committed to this diagnosis phase and to work very closely with the engineering firm to which the work is entrusted, if that is the approach taken.

In effect, this phase is the first signal to the players of the new approach, and the first opportunity to identify and get in touch with each of them.

Concerning the diagnosis itself, it must be as complete as possible⁵; it must in particular deal with:

- responsibilities and the institutions in charge of road safety,
- accident databases or available data,
- behaviours, from the standpoint of the educational continuum:
 - accident prevention aimed at young people and education,
 - driving: forms of learning, evaluation, post-license training,
 - accident prevention campaigns,
- vehicles (technical inspection), condition of the fleet,
- regulations, inspections,
- infrastructure, urban improvements, signing,
- first aid, health care,
- training in road safety.



Driving examination in Burkina Faso, 2001.



Technical inspection in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2001.



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■ Step 2: initiate, then formalise co-operation

A national co-operation seminar serves to get the approach started. To be effective, it must have solid foundations, which is why it is desirable for it to be based on the complete diagnosis, which can thus be presented and discussed in this context. This is the first objective of the seminar.

The second objective is then to define, on this basis, priorities that are as consensual as possible.

The third objective is to develop a coherent and legible plan of action.

Finally, provision must be made for the gradual formalisation of a co-operation body issuing from this seminar (follow-up committee, etc.). The national seminar that kicks off the actions leads to the creation of a follow-up committee or of a national road safety committee, the first institutional co-operative body, with the mission of defining and co-ordinating the main high-priority themes of road safety policy.

A certain number of options must be taken in this stage, concerning:

- Its composition: it may be interministerial or broadened to include other players (associations, etc.);
- Its status: consultative or decision-making body, etc.;
- Its positioning: Primature, Ministry of Transports, etc.

These options must be taken according to the institutional context⁶ of the country in question, and each has its advantages and its drawbacks.

As an illustration, please see on the following page the organisation chart of the Road and Traffic Safety Directorate (DSCR) in France, and the particular positioning of the Interministerial Committee on Road Safety (its secretary is also the director of the DSCR).

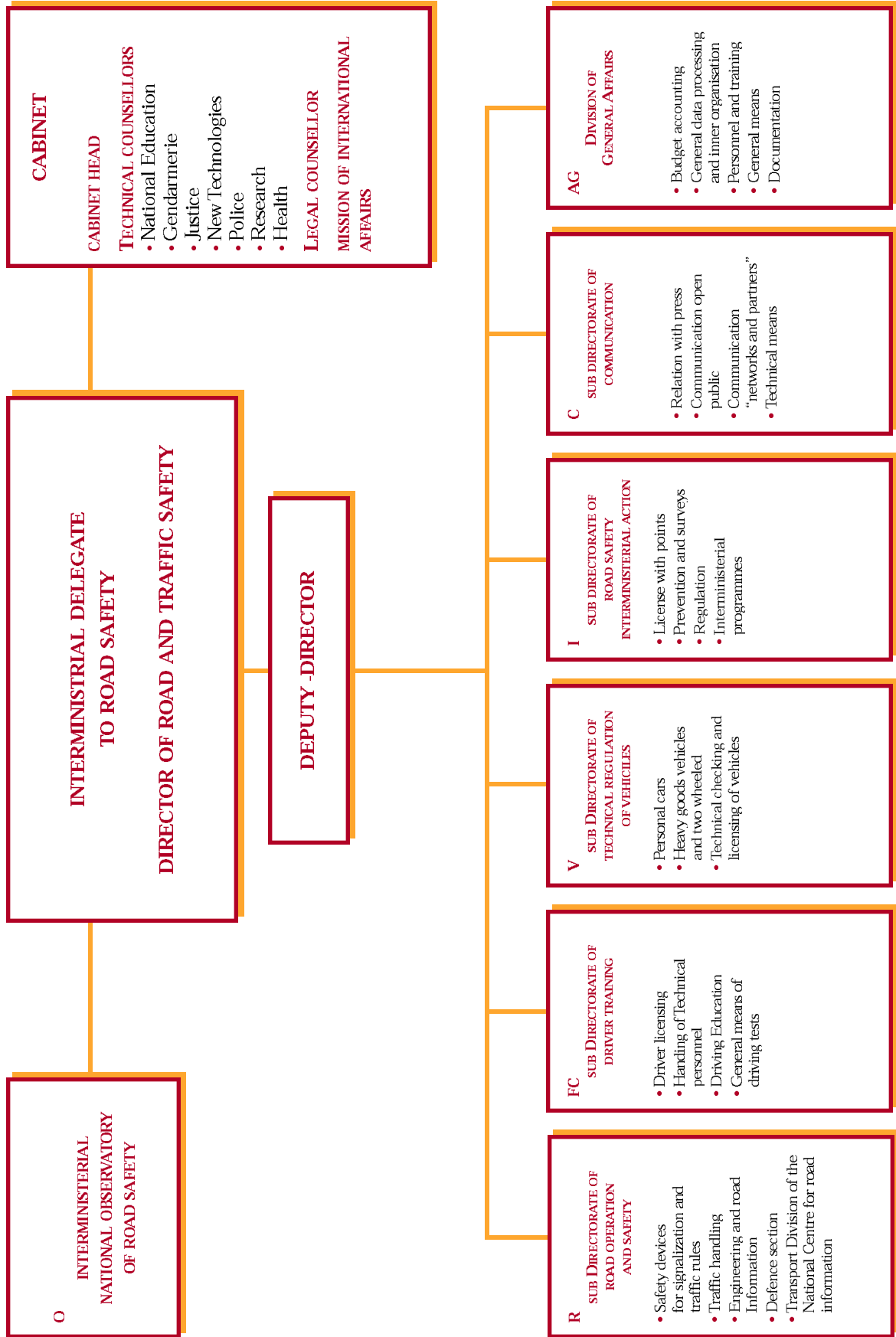
Concerning the missions of the co-operation body, they can be the following:

- Ongoing monitoring of accidentology, inventory, diagnosis: it is in effect important that this body should be a place for analysis, understanding, and interpretation of the phenomena, and possibly, for the identification of a need for studies;
- preparation of a coherent national plan;
- identification, definition, follow-up, and reporting of actions;
- mutual information, co-ordination, and consistency of actions;
- breakdown of responsibilities for implementation.

⁵ To establish a complete diagnosis, the reader may refer to the methodology developed in the context of the road safety diagnosis study performed for the UEMOA by the Isted/Inrets/Sitrass consortium. A check-list prepared for this purpose will soon be published in an Inrets research report.

⁶ The reader may refer to the Isted transport department report : "Mission report - Road safety policy - Abidjan (Ivory Coast)", June 1999, Nicole Muhlrud (Inrets).

Organisation chart of the Road and Traffic Safety Directorate



■ Step 3: information systems

The objective analysis of the situation

The objective analysis of the situation must be the working document of the co-operation body which has been set up. It must promote “constructive” co-operation as a decision making tool. Knowledge of the characteristics and factors involved in accidents is the heart of arrangements to define road safety policy, both to help formulate and create a better targeted road safety policy and for use in following it up and conducting meaningful evaluations.

Qualitative analyses essential to understanding and interpreting the statistical analyses

The work involves more than just statistics and databases, even if they are essential. In effect, it is important not to stop at statistical analyses; they can be of help in detecting the phenomena, but are not always sufficient when it comes to understanding and interpreting them with a view to concrete action. It is essential to complete them with more qualitative analyses of accidents (in-depth examination of actual accident sequences), complementary investigations in the field, and interviews of the populations most involved in or affected by accidents in order to improve our understanding of the mechanisms and behaviours that lead to accidents and identify relevant and appropriate measures to limit them.

Access to the information base

Easy access is essential: the data and statistics must be available quickly, and accessible to a broad public: local partners, associations, government agencies, consultants, research organisations, etc.

THE CASE OF SENEGAL

In spite of the efforts made from the outset to explain the BAAC and put across its importance, the first findings in 1994 revealed a very low level of forms forwarded to the DTT (roughly, only 200 accidents out of more than 4,000 estimated were reported in the course of the year). The police had not really taken on board how useful it was to fill in this form, though it would represent extra work when they had inadequate human resources and were poorly motivated because there was no feedback on the actual use of the data and the corresponding stakes.

In addition, the equipment and financial resources were inadequate, so the police were not always able to visit the scene of an accident. Training and awareness campaigns to promote the value of the databases, and more practical guidance in filling out the BAAC, combined with an effort by the DTT to provide feedback, resulted in improved reliability.

Setting up “data collection brigades” (employees of the land transport department travelling to police stations to collect the completed BAACs) had a significant impact on the results.

But permanent vigilance is necessary: reasons as varied as reassignments and shortages of blank BAAC forms can be enough to significantly impair the quality and reliability of the database.

Very often, international assessments encounter difficulties of access to the databases, sometimes entailing extra costs (leading to delays) or even a need for complementary investigations, which are moreover not always taken into account by the country concerned.



Dakar, Senegal, 2001.

Awareness, motivation, training: a permanent concern at each stage of the data collection and analysis process

Concerning accident databases (BAAC project), one decisive factor in the success of this project lies in the motivation, awareness, and training of the personnel in the data routing circuit, from the accident report to data entry and processing. This requires constant attention, failing which the reliability of the data may be compromised.

A few measures for the long-term survival of the tool

It is essential to sustain the drive to gather accident information in order to be able to provide data of consistent quality and quantity over a number of years. To ensure better forwarding of the BAAC, we recommend:

- making the BAAC official by ministerial decree,
- making the BAAC follow-up committee official,
- having a duly empowered project leader,
- setting up a BAAC collection and follow-up brigade to visit police stations weekly to pick up the completed BAACs and make sure that the number of BAACs filled out matches the number of accident certificates and that blank forms are available,
- regularly disseminating the results obtained to motivate the persons assigned to filling out the forms and help them understand how much better it is to use such a survey. It is essential, in particular, to schedule periodic data retrieval and interpretation sessions, to make it a veritable decision making tool.

At the information processing level, there is a problem of continuity in the effort: it is essential to train computer scientists, employees of the DTT or of the organization in charge of road safety, but the mobility of employees makes it impossible to guarantee that the system will endure and that the employees in charge of file management are sufficiently qualified. This makes it desirable to create conditions under which local qualifications will be preserved, by calling in a local private company; this will provide a reserve of skills allowing local maintenance, and also a bridge during transition periods (while waiting for the possible assignment and/or training of government employees). It was in fact for this reason that the regional BAAC workshop was open to experts from the private sector, who will be led to assist the government agency in charge of managing the database.

Centralising data entry and processing in the government agency in charge of accident statistics facilitates implementation of the BAAC, at least in the project start-up period. Decentralisation to the regions could be considered in a second stage, but only after consolidation of the system.

Accident black spots: the difficulties of locating the scene

The use of the BAAC to identify accident black spots faces the difficulty of locating the accidents precisely, in cities where many streets are neither referenced on the ground nor listed. The problem of addressing remains crucial in road safety, both for possible improvements of black spots and for emergency relief when an accident occurs.

Step 4: building a coherent national plan

A juxtaposition of isolated measures has little chance of bearing fruit⁷.

It is essential to set priorities, with the highest priority being assigned to the main factors in accidents and to measures that will have the most impact on the number of accident victims.

Establish specific working groups

In addition, because co-operation and direct involvement favour the accountability of various national partners each of the themes identified gives rise, if necessary, to the creation of an ad hoc group charged with steering and implementing the planned action. Such an approach is essential to the survival of the local initiatives and to the creation of solutions appropriate to the local context.



Pikine, Senegal, 1999.

⁷ See two documents: "Report of mission of supervision of the road safety component of PST 2 Senegal", October 2000 and March 2001, Béatrice Adoléhoumé, (Isted/World Bank).

Assign an active role to the national partners

Working groups (steering and follow-up committees) are charged with making recommendations, defining the objectives to be reached, designing and creating a plan of concrete joint actions. The conclusions and proposals of these committees become, in a first stage, the object of experiments. The committees then evaluate the results of the experiments and make the necessary adjustments, in an iterative process, before generalising the application of the proposed solutions and following them up.



Driving test in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, 2001.

→ AN EXAMPLE...

A country undecided as to which of 3 types of measures should have priority:

- the training program for driving school instructors,
- learning alongside an accomplished driver (the traditional way),
- reform of the driving test in a country where, in practice, most drivers do most of their learning to drive outside driving schools (sometimes they spend only a few hours in one, barely significant).

It is clear that the training or selection of instructors is not a high priority. Similarly, reforming the examination will have less effect than work on learning conditions. Because learning, especially when it is over an extended period, marks a driver's behaviour for several years. Moreover, in Africa, a non-negligible number of people learn in traffic, for a significant duration. It is therefore vital to provide a better framework for the learning process. The examination, whatever the form it takes, is still just an evaluation at one given time and is necessarily somewhat subjective, especially since a significant fraction of the carriers are illiterate.

Thus, it is necessary, each time, to think about the country's accidentology, about the measures to be taken in priority, and about their impact.

■ Step 5: implementing the actions

First of all, the procedures for mobilising financing must be mastered. Paradoxically, there are countries where projects fail to see the light of day although there are funds allocated to road safety (a share of the highway budget) that remain unspent at the end of the fiscal year, simply because of the complexity of the procedures.

It is essential, for each action, to make a department accountable, designate a project manager, and train him/her for the assigned task.

It is desirable to create, for each action, an interdisciplinary steering committee or working group to strengthen the often

skeletal teams of the government agency and make the most of the skills of each. This will make it possible to associate the carriers and drivers with the planning of accident prevention campaigns, call on professional associations for possible support, etc. This committee is charged with following up and implementing the action, preparing guidelines, identifying malfunctions and reorienting the program in consequence, and also with the effective implementation of the actions. A precise timetable must be established, including the scheduling of periodic retrievals in plenary co-operation meetings.

■ Step 6: evaluate, adjust

The program is conceived by an iterative process. Since deficient road safety conditions evolve, the process must be repeated from time to time: diagnosis, co-operation, implementation, evaluation, etc.

The changes are ongoing: mobility, structure of space, physical characteristics, institutional players, etc.

Questioning and in-depth evaluations are essential.

■ At each step: training and qualification are decisive

Underlying all actions taken, at each step, there must be a process of training and qualification, the necessary condition of durability.

In Africa, human resources in road safety are still rare and a permanent effort to develop and preserve these resources must be made.

The regional scale seems to be the right one, because it is rather improbable that each country would be able to afford its own road safety training system, with all the particularities that entails.

For example, it would not be justified to set up specific training in accident databases in each country, because the demand in any one country is limited. On the other hand, given the infrastructure existing in the sub-region, and the development of the corresponding skills in these countries, it would be possible to institute such training in one of the countries (the one having the most experience in the field and specialised instructors). This could lead to regional sessions. The same process could be adopted for the other specialities: psychology of the driver, infrastructure, etc, on the basis of one form of specialisation per country.

Thus, even though the number of experts needed in any given country is not enough to justify setting up high-quality continuous training programs, a form of specialisation by country, organised on the basis of regional sessions (cf. the experience of the “BAAC” and “road safety” workshops mentioned p. 18 of this guide) could serve, for each speciality, to establish a “regional pool of experts”. This form of organisation would have the additional benefit of mutual enrichment through exchanges of experience and a group dynamic and would contribute to the building up of a consolidated network of experts, while taking advantage of the existing infrastructure in the countries concerned.

One could imagine completing this with integrated road safety training (awareness, familiarisation) in schools of public works (infrastructure related matters), of information processing (accident databases), of police, of city planning, in universities (psychology of the driver, medicine, traumatology, etc.), or teachers’ colleges, etc. This training would serve to interest various professions in road safety and so contribute to constituting a pool of African experts from complementary professional backgrounds.



Driving license examination (theoretical part), Burkina-Fasao, 2001.