

## **Child Road Safety in Bangkok: implementing local measures whilst advancing international awareness and collaboration**

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### **Abstract**

If child road accidents are to be eliminated, opportunities for collective local actions need to be greatly increased. This paper reports on the preparation and development of the first Road Safety project benefiting from a Rotary Global Grant. Data for the exercise was collected in-situ and analyses were carried out to assess the impact of the measures. The study aimed at providing helmets for children in two schools in Bangkok and contributing to reshaping road users' behaviours. Furthermore, this (mostly) Australasian multi-partner collaboration changed policies at international level which have the potential to improve Road Safety worldwide.

### **Introduction**

Thailand has the second highest road traffic fatality rate in the world (36.2 deaths per 100,000 population<sup>1</sup>) of which over 70%<sup>1</sup> are motorcycle riders. Of the 1.3 million daily child motorcycle passengers only 7%<sup>2</sup> wear helmets.

Rotary<sup>3</sup> is a global network of 1.2 million people who take local, regional and global action to create lasting change. Rotary has vast experience in tackling persistent world issues but Road Safety (RS) has not yet been a systematic priority. In 2015, Rotary Clubs of Matilda Bay (Australia) and Srpathum (Thailand) chose to look for opportunities to improve child RS in Bangkok, ultimately leading to change in Rotary International (RI) policies.

### **School based Child Helmet Program**

Rotary Clubs (RCs) of Matilda Bay and Srpathum selected a school based Child Helmet Program. This methodology, designed and implemented by AIPFoundation, has various phases: (1) RS training, (2) helmets provision, (3) monitoring and reporting and (4) dissemination of results. Schools are chosen based on criteria of risk exposure and lack of RS awareness. Further surveys are performed for assessment purposes.

### **Prathom Taveetha Pisek School**

In 2015, the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) in partnership with both RCs (benefitting from a Rotary District Grant) supported the Child Helmet Program. It was carried out at Prathom School which has 729 children and 49 teachers. Rotary participation consisted of funding (roughly 30% of USD13,300 project), attendance at the Helmet Provision Ceremony and dissemination of the project. This smaller yet successful collaboration paved the way for a subsequent project.

### **Wat Rachasingkorn School**

Building upon the previous collaboration, Rotary and ARRB are funding the Wat Rachasingkorn School project (2018), expanding its scope by:

- increasing the number of partners to 17, and their geographical coverage; for a \$44,000USD project (70% are Rotary contributions);
- successful application to a Rotary Global Grant, leading to the establishment of RS as a new Focus Area within RI; and
- complementing data analysis, by University NOVA (Portugal).

## Conclusions

This Abstract summarises the approach adopted by RCs of Matilda Bay and Srapathum to help increasing child helmet usage in Bangkok. It outlines the Child Helmet Program's most relevant characteristics and describes project implementation in two primary schools. Analyses show: (1) around 60% increase in helmet usage, (2) several potentially fatal accidents were avoided and (3) 100% of teachers stated confidence to explain RS thereafter. Results indicate it will be helpful to replicate RS child educational programs in other regions, increase parents training and refine assessments.

The Rotary strategy impacted international policy much beyond initial expectations because attracted widespread international partnerships and led to the inclusion of RS within RI Focus Areas.

This work demonstrates the potential of broadening (international and community) participation to pursue defined international RS policies<sup>4,6</sup> through the implementation of local projects benefiting from established knowledge, leveraging tested methodologies and using limited resources. The work exemplifies how new paths can, in turn, lead to a change in global policies (in this case RI) potentially impacting a multitude of communities across the world.

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