

Child Injuries are Preventable

Emeka slipped while drawing water from the river near her village in Nigeria and did not return home . . .

Drowning is the most common cause of injuries for infants, killing approximately 60 000 children under five every year and leaving roughly the same number permanently disabled. Children also suffer burns from open fires and kerosene stoves, and are injured in falls at home, at school and at playgrounds.

In older children, however, the overriding cause of injuries is road traffic accidents, killing approximately 180 000 children under 15 each year. Children are rarely the cause of road traffic accidents but suffer as pedestrians, cyclists and passengers. Boys, often given greater freedom to roam, are more likely to be injured than girls.

Injuries are unnecessary and avoidable. The use of seatbelts and child car seats, and the wearing of helmets are essential to prevent the death of child passengers or cyclists. Traffic measures such as checking vehicle roadworthiness, enforcing speed limits and prosecuting drunk drivers are particularly important in developing countries, where roads tend to be poorly maintained and the number of vehicles is growing rapidly.

Injuries from road traffic accidents already cost developing countries US\$ 65 billion a year – more than the annual amount of development assistance they receive.

