

Safety measures could save 250,000 lives a year in low- and middle-income countries

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Interventions such as speeding enforcement and formal swimming lessons for young children could potentially save more than 250,000 lives a year if they were implemented across populations living in extreme poverty in low- and middle-income countries, according to a new study from researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The review found the most successful safety measures involved road safety, with speed enforcement saving more than 80,000 lives per year and drunk-driving enforcement, saving more than 60,000 lives a year. The next category was child safety, with formal swimming lessons for children younger than 14 years saving more than 25,000 lives and the use of crèches, or playpens, to supervise children younger than 5 years, saving more than 10,000 lives

The paper, published April 11 in *The Lancet Global Health*, was led by researchers at the Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit, which is based at the Bloomberg School.

"With such critical lifesaving findings, this new research represents a real opportunity to reduce the global burden of preventable deaths among the world's poorest and most in-need populations," said Andres I. Vecino-Ortiz, MD, an assistant scientist at the Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit and the study's lead author. "Where there is arguably the greatest need for help, this study shows something can be done."

To estimate the effect of these interventions, the researchers targeted the poorest billion people worldwide in countries identified by The Lancet's Non-Communicable Disease and Injury (NCDI) Poverty Commission. From the 102 countries in the NCDI commission, 18 were excluded due to absent or inadequate data.

Following a literature review of more than 500 publications, Vecino-Ortiz and his colleagues isolated 11 measures that had a significant effect on mortality. Six were for road traffic injuries, while the remaining five were for drowning. No data on mortality for interventions were found that addressed falls, burns or poisonings.

"In these 84 countries where the poorest billion people live, the burden of unintentional injuries is tragically increasing. But these interventions have the potential to save countless lives and make a significant impact on communities," said Adnan A. Hyder, MD, director of Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit and a professor in the Bloomberg School's Department of International Health. "With more support and a greater focus on studying [injury](#) interventions, global health researchers can save even more lives."

This paper is a call to action for decision makers to implement evidence-based, effective safety measures to protect the lives of the most vulnerable. Also, this study reveals the concerning gaps in knowledge on the effectiveness of injury interventions in low- and [middle-income countries](#).

More information: "Effective interventions for unintentional injuries: a systematic review and mortality impact assessment among the poorest billion" *The Lancet Global Health*, 2018.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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