

The launch of the *World Report on Child Injury Prevention*: hopefully the beginning of an end to a childhood tragedy

Hisashi Ogawa and Marianna Trias

The *World report on child injury prevention*, jointly prepared by WHO and UNICEF was launched in Hanoi, Vietnam in December 2008. This long-awaited report has benefited from the input of over 180 contributors in 56 countries. It appeals to governments, practitioners and parents alike to "Keep Kids Safe" by implementing known good practices.

The report focuses on unintentional injuries to children under the age of 18 years – specifically those related to road traffic crashes, drowning, burns, falls and poisoning. The report begins by framing the issue of child injuries within the context of child survival and then goes on to discuss each specific type of injury. It discusses in some depth the evidence behind individual interventions and grades these as effective, promising, those that have insufficient evidence, ineffective or potentially harmful. The report concludes by providing recommendations that governments and practitioners should consider when addressing child injuries. It suggests that if a handful of specific low-cost interventions, such as child restraints, helmets, smoke alarms and pool fencing were employed around the world, "more than 1000 children's lives could be saved every day".

The major recommendations from the report for countries are as follows:

- Develop a comprehensive child injury prevention policy.
- Implement specific actions to prevent and control child injuries.
- Strengthen health systems to address child injuries.
- Enhance the quality and quantity of data for child injury prevention.
- Define priorities for research.

The overall goal of the *World report on child injury prevention* is to raise awareness among policy-makers, practitioners and parents alike about the magnitude, risk and preventability of child injuries.

In the Western Pacific Region, about 124,000 children under 15 years die of various types of injuries each year (Global Burden of Disease: the 2004 update, WHO). Of these deaths, drowning, road traffic injuries, falls and poisoning constitute 56,000, 17,000, 6,000 and 6,000 deaths, respectively. Drowning is a significant problem, especially among boys.

While overall child survival has improved due to improvements mainly in immunisation, perinatal health and nutrition, the proportion of injuries as a cause of death has increased. Using the *Regional Framework for Action on Injury and Violence Prevention (2008-2013)* and the *WHO/UNICEF Regional Child Survival Strategy*, WHO aims to reduce unnecessary deaths of children in the Western Pacific Region. It is essential to integrate injury prevention into child survival and health policy frameworks. WHO and UNICEF encourage readers of the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* to use the report to stimulate action in their own country in an attempt to "Keep Kids Safe".

To obtain your own copy of the *World Report on Child Injury Prevention* or related products please send an email to childinjury@who.int or download it from www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/child.

Authors

Dr Ogawa and Dr Trias are staff members of the Western Pacific Regional Office, World Health Organization. They are responsible for the views expressed in this publication and they do not necessarily represent the decisions or policies of the World Health Organization.