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IN BOX: LITTLE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

March/April 2004

## Grand Death Auto

By 2020, traffic fatalities will be the world's third leading cause of death after heart disease and tobacco smoke and ahead of HIV/AIDS, according to a recent report by the Global Burden of Disease Project (GBD), cosponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. More than 1 million people are killed on the world's roads each year, and nearly 90 percent of these deaths occur in low- to middle-income nations. In 2000, Southeast Asia alone bore one third of the brunt with 435,000 road crash deaths, and Africa had the highest road traffic death rate: 28 deaths per 100,000 people. In high-income countries with high safety standards, traffic fatalities were comparatively low, with 125,000 deaths annually.

In 1990, traffic accidents were the ninth leading cause of global death, accounting for an estimated 2.5 percent of deaths worldwide. By 2020, they will account for 5.1 percent—in comparison, HIV/AIDS will account for 2.6 percent. The surge in road traffic deaths is expected to take place primarily in the developing world. The GBD estimates that between now and 2020, traffic deaths will rise by 92 percent in China and by 147 percent in India.

Increasing road traffic injuries also threaten economic development. The WHO estimates that road traffic injuries cost developing countries around \$65 billion every year, easily exceeding the total amount of development assistance flowing to these countries. As a first step to raise awareness of the problem, the WHO is devoting this year's World Health Day on April 7 to road traffic safety.

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