



A Brief Report on NIMHANS – UL Research Program

Date : August 7, 2019

Venue : NIMHANS Convention Centre, Bengaluru

Children are susceptible to injuries owing to their difficulty in risk perceptions, curiosity, impulsivity and risk-taking behaviour. A national report titled, *Advancing Child Safety in India: Implementation is the Key*, was released on August 7, 2019 by National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), an institute of national importance and Underwriters Laboratories (UL), a global safety science company.

The report focuses on unintentional injuries and emphasizes the need to prevent child injuries and increase awareness about safety standards in schools amongst the key stakeholders. Policy makers, law enforcement, governments, school managements and parents have a role to play in making India safer for our children. The event saw around 150 plus participants representing each of these communities.

Apart from the secondary research from key data sources, the report also includes the insights from safety appraisals conducted across 131 schools (public and

private) in Bengaluru and Kolar districts. These schools were assessed and scored on physical infrastructure, road and fire safety and first-aid facilities. The research team developed a digital safety appraisal tool based on various existing national-level guidelines and quantified safety level percentage) in every school at a macro-level.

The study revealed that while various policies and legislations like the National School Safety Guidelines, the National Disaster Management Authority's School Safety Policy guidelines, the National Building Code, etc. are in place to promote safety and prevent injuries to children, there are several implementation challenges. The existing guidelines, legislations and standards need to be strictly rolled out by strengthening mechanisms at the local-level including funding to specifically carry out certain recommendations.

Key insights: Child injury situation in India:

- Child injuries are a growing public health problem with nearly 5,00,000 child deaths in the last decade
- Of the total injury fatalities due to intentional and unintentional causes, child deaths account for 15%
- 60% of all child injury deaths occur among those aged between 15-18 years
- Proportion of child injury deaths at the site of injury in rural areas (58%) was higher than urban areas (33%)
- Nearly 41% of all fatal injuries occurred on roads followed by 31% at home
- Road crashes / accidents are the most common cause of child injury deaths. Road traffic injuries (RTIs) accounted for 37-38% of deaths among 0-14 year-old and 62-64% among 14-18 year-old children
- Burns and drowning accounted for 10-11% and 13-19% of all deaths respectively
- Falls and poisoning injuries account for 5-6% of all deaths among children
- Half the child injury deaths can be averted with efficient trauma care systems
- 10% of injured children experience temporary functional limitation varying from one week to several months. 2% of children are left with permanent disability and 12% live with long term (>6 weeks) temporary disability

Some key findings from the safety appraisals of schools in Bengaluru and Kolar:

- Overall safety in schools was observed to be 50.8% of expected levels. These levels are derived from a cumulative guideline created from the frameworks set by government authorities.
- Physical infrastructure in schools with respect to safety components (flooring, staircases, corridors, balconies, windows and railings in buildings and classrooms) was acceptable in majority of schools with anti-skid floor being present in 54.2% of the schools
- Safety of roads adjoining the schools (in terms of school zone signage, speed limit display, presence of speed breakers, pot-hole free roads, footpaths, zebra crossings, supervised lane crossing and designated drop and pick up zones) was scored at 20.8% of expected levels. Only 17% of schools had roads which showed school zone signage and 11.5% had displayed speed limits
- 43% of school buses had closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and 58% had global positioning system (GPS) tracking system
- Fire safety in most schools was compromised, as it was 20% of expected levels. Most schools did not have a fire safety certificate. Evacuation plans, fire logbooks, detectors and alarms were present in less than 8% of the schools. However, 94% had extinguishers
- 90% of the schools did not maintain any injury related health record

*The report provides key insights for furthering UL's mission in

- In the area of advancing fire safety across school community
- Taking National Safety Science Campaign to the next level by influencing the stakeholders to engage in meaningful conversations and bring in the infrastructure related changes
- Develop IEC materials and exploring minimum package of interventions at school level that are scalable, replicable and sustainable

- Connecting with the school community who has been part of this program and expanding UL's Safety Club program
- There are areas that can be further worked upon from transportation perspective with regard to school commute
- The report has kindled the need for a safer school ecosystem and it can be further used as a tool kit by likeminded partners

No child should die or suffer disability because of lack of implementation of preventable and workable solutions. Death, hospitalization and disabilities due to injuries is a neglected and hidden problem in India among children. There is a need for evidence-based policies and programs that require implementation on the ground.

In all, we generated 51 articles across print, online news portals, trade media and news wires. We will continue to leverage the launch in our conversations with media in the short term weaving it into a larger narrative on child safety considering the utter lack of insights on this topic.

Online coverage

S No.	Publication	Headline
1	The Economic Times	<u>Infrastructure for child safety in schools poor, says study</u>
2	The Times of India	<u>Only 20% of schools in Bengaluru, Kolar have fire safety measures: Report</u>
3	The Hindu	<u>Survey indicates that schools pay least attention to fire and traffic safety</u>