



# Press Release

## Infrastructure around schools needs to improve reveals NIMHANS-UL report on child safety

*Strict implementation of existing policies, programs and legislations is the key to reduce child injuries in India*

**Bengaluru, August 07, 2019:** 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 today 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 emphasizes the need to prevent child injuries and increase awareness about safety standards in schools amongst the key stakeholders. A safe environment for children is an absolute necessity for their growth and development.

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.

“Over the years, we have built long-standing partnerships with various government bodies, research organisations and leading academic institutions to conduct independent data and science-based researches. We share knowledge built over 125 years of our existence through safety education, public outreach initiatives and development of standards to ensure safer environments across domains. In India, we have been conducting National Safety Science Campaign, which focusses on educating and influencing children’s behaviour towards safety. The research study with NIMHANS looks at the infrastructure and ecosystem that exists around children that can influence safety outcomes. Policy makers, law enforcement, governments, school managements and parents have a role to play in making India safer for our children,” said **Mr. Suresh Sugavanam, vice president and managing director in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa for UL.**

Commenting on the significance of the report, **Dr. Gururaj G, dean of neuro sciences and senior professor in the department of epidemiology for NIMHANS** said, “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. No child should die or suffer disability because of lack of implementation of preventable and workable solutions.”

### **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
- 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 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. Child safety is the joint responsibility of governments, ministries, departments, industries, school managements and parents. Children need to be safe in all places. Proper implementation of existing policies, programs and legislations is the first step and key to reduce child injuries in India, the report concluded.

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### **About NIMHANS**

National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) is an institute of national importance in the field of mental health and neuro sciences and the World Health Organization's (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion – Centre for Public Health, and has been working in road safety as well as other areas of injury prevention for several years. The centre is engaged in public health and epidemiological research, capacity building and human resource development, advocacy, policy and program development as well as monitoring and evaluation. Specific areas of expertise include road safety, drowning, burns, suicide, child injuries and workplace injuries. For more details, visit <http://www.nimhans.ac.in/>.