

CASE STUDY

Child Road Safety Programming in Moldova

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Introduction and background

Global road traffic safety

Worldwide, child injuries constitute a major yet frequently underrecognized public health issue. Road traffic injuries have emerged as the primary cause of mortality among children and young people between ages 5 and 19 years. Annually, road traffic crashes claim the lives of approximately 181,453 children aged 0–19 years, globally. These preventable tragedies often lead to permanent disabilities, ongoing physical pain and significant disruptions to children’s developmental trajectories across physical, emotional and cognitive domains. At both individual and societal levels, child

injuries generate substantial economic burdens and social hardships for families and communities alike. Such injuries can fundamentally alter a child’s developmental path, highlighting the importance of creating safe environments where children can flourish. Ensuring equitable access to injury prevention measures is vital so that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, can enjoy healthy, secure childhoods. At its core, child injury prevention extends beyond saving lives – it enables environments where every child can achieve their maximum potential.

UNICEF plays a crucial role in child injury prevention efforts globally, leveraging its expertise, partnerships and advocacy to promote evidence-based interventions. UNICEF works globally to protect children’s rights, ensuring they have access to education, healthcare and safe environments. Child injury prevention is a critical component of its mission, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where road traffic injuries disproportionately affect young pedestrians. UNICEF advocates for evidence-based policies, infrastructure development and educational programmes that enhance child safety.

Road traffic safety in Moldova

Moldova, a lower-middle-income nation in Eastern Europe, has a total population of roughly 2.5 million, with approximately 560,000 children and adolescents aged 0–17 years, representing 21.6 per cent of its inhabitants. The country confronts notable challenges regarding child injuries, with road traffic incidents, drowning events, burn injuries and falls constituting the most prevalent causes of injury-related mortality and disability among its younger population.

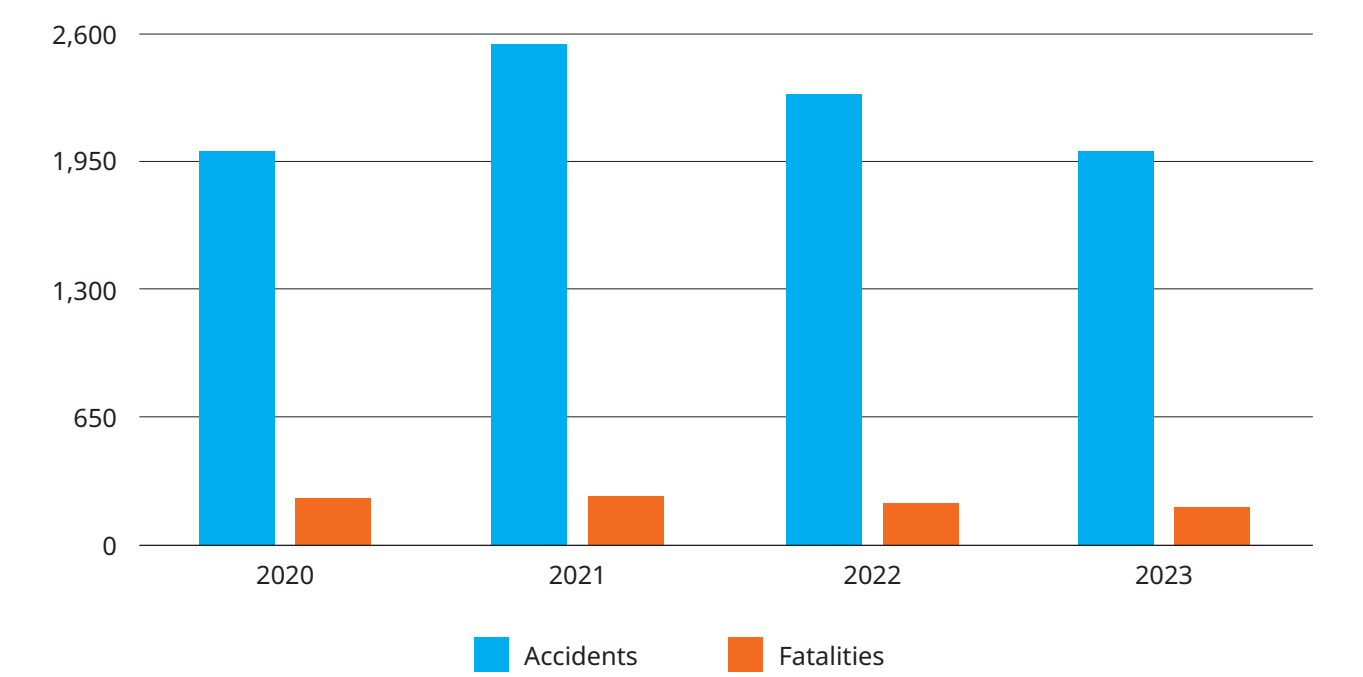
Within Moldova, road traffic injuries pose a particularly serious threat to child safety. Each year, road crashes result in approximately 25 fatalities among children and adolescents, while an additional 100 young people sustain serious injuries. Moldova has 1 death per 10 accidents versus the European average of 1 death per 45 accidents while pedestrians account for 36 per cent of road fatalities in Moldova (compared to the European average of 27 per cent). These

figures underscore the pressing need for robust road safety interventions and preventative measures to safeguard Moldovan children.

For many Moldovan school children, daily journeys to and from school involve considerable safety risks. Children in both urban centres and rural communities face heightened vulnerability to traffic-related injuries due to various environmental risk factors prevalent throughout

the country. These include high-velocity traffic near educational institutions, insufficient pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks and crossings, and limited road safety knowledge among road users, including both drivers and pedestrians. Recent trends in road crash statistics are shown in Figure 1.

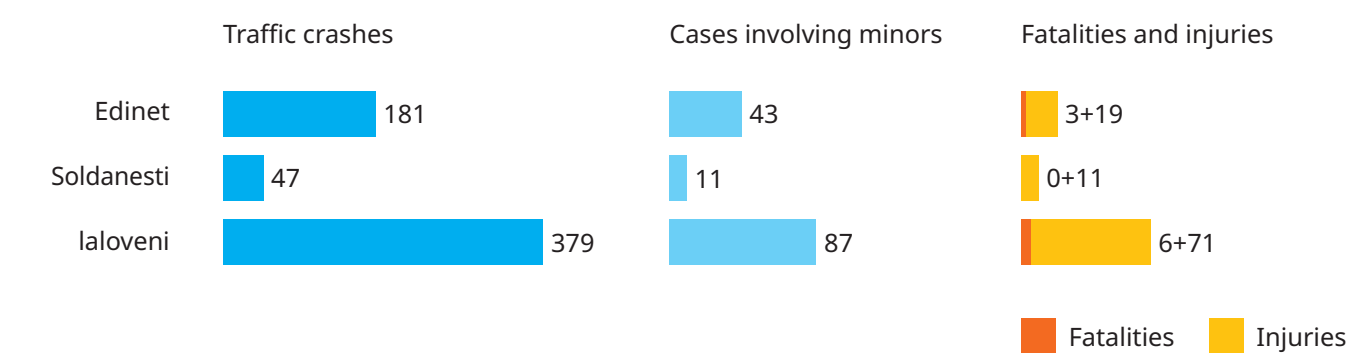
Figure 1: Moldova road traffic statistics, 2020–2023



Source: National Inspectorate for Public Security, Republic of Moldova (2023)

A significant number of road crashes in Moldova occur near schools. An analysis of data from the National Inspectorate for Public Security in three districts (Figure 2) highlights the risks children face while commuting to and from school. Across all three regions, approximately 23 per cent of traffic crashes involved minors, highlighting the consistent vulnerability of children in these areas.

Figure 2: Comparative analysis of traffic crashes in three regions



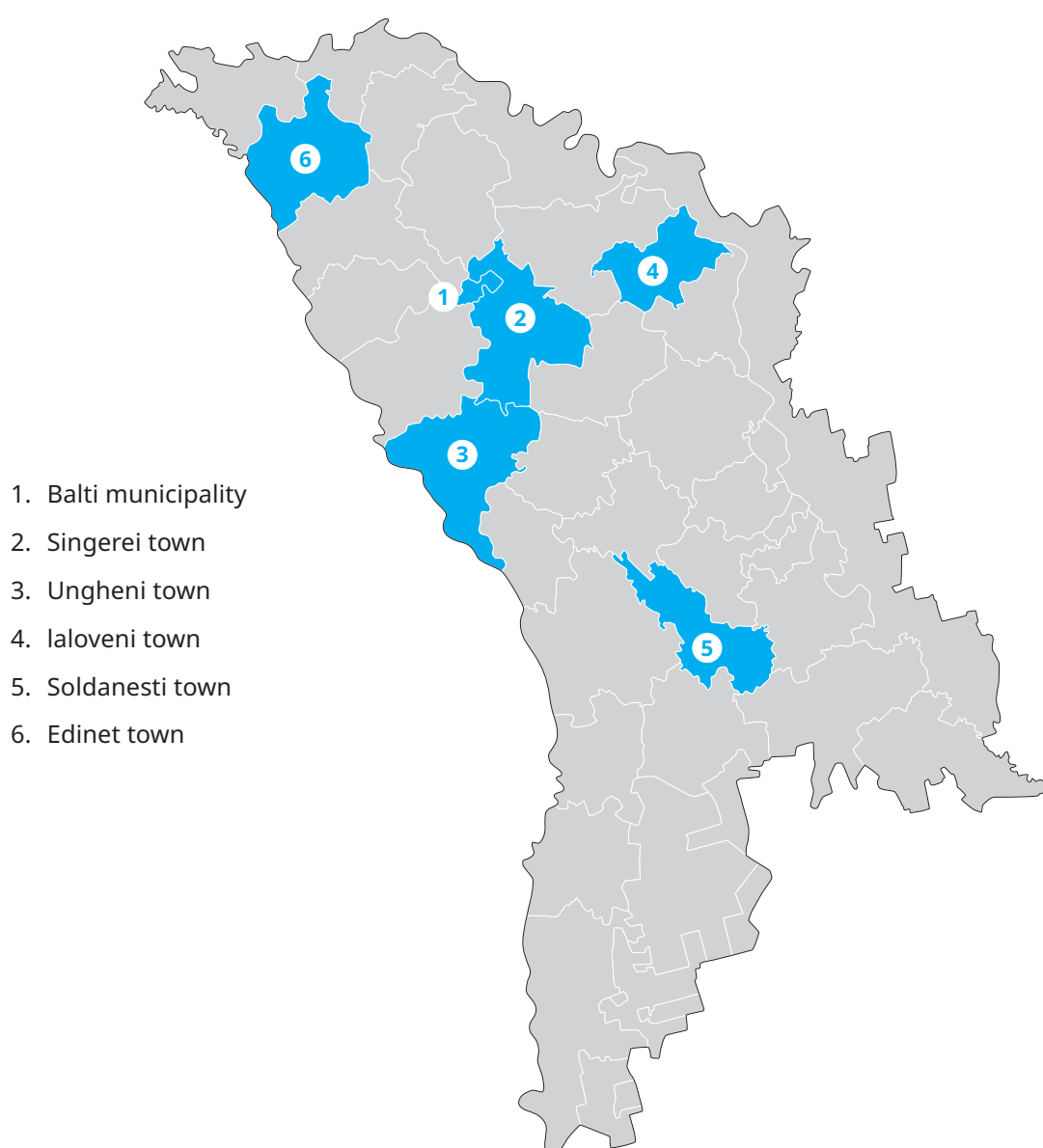
Source: National Inspectorate for Public Security, Republic of Moldova

The project

This case study examines UNICEF's contributions to child injury prevention in Moldova, highlighting key strategies, successes and lessons learned to inform future efforts.

The child road safety programme in Moldova was implemented across five regions, including Balti municipality, Singerei, Ungheni, Soldanesti, Ialoveni and Edinet towns. The project, which was implemented from January 2023 to March 2025, focused on creating safer environments for children, particularly around schools and on routes to educational facilities.

Figure 3: Where the project was implemented, January 2023 to March 2025



To implement the project effectively, UNICEF established strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including:

- The Ministry of Education and Research (MER), which provided policy guidance, facilitated access to schools and supported the development and integration of road safety education into school curricula.
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), which contributed to enforcement strategies and policy implementation around school zones.
- Local public administrations (LPAs) in target localities, which provided essential local context, resources and support for infrastructure modifications and community engagement.
- Civil society organizations (CSOs), which helped mobilize communities, conduct awareness-raising activities and implement on-the-ground interventions.
- Automobile Club of Moldova (ACM), which provided technical expertise in road safety assessments, educational materials and training programmes.
- Schools and preschools in the target areas, which served as implementation sites and engaged educators, parents and students in road safety initiatives.

This project in Moldova focused on enhancing road safety for children through a comprehensive approach that combined infrastructure improvements, policy development, education and community engagement.

Implementation strategies

The project employed a multi-faceted strategy aimed at creating safer environments for children, particularly around schools, through:

- Development of a comprehensive road map for the implementation of 30km/h school speed zones across target communities.
- Policy development and testing for standardized school zones and traffic calming measures around educational institutions.
- Capacity building of local service providers, teachers, police officers and other stakeholders in road safety practices and education.
- Educational interventions through the development and implementation of road safety curriculum materials for schools.
- Infrastructure modifications in selected school areas based on thorough safety assessments.
- Community awareness campaigns to increase knowledge about road safety among children, parents and the general public.
- Behavioural experiments to identify practical, effective approaches to changing road user behaviour.



Monitoring and evaluation

The project employed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to track progress, assess impact and identify areas for improvement throughout the implementation period.

Evaluation approach

- Pre- and post-intervention assessments: tracking changes in traffic speed, pedestrian behaviour and safety ratings.
- Questionnaire-based evaluations: online surveys to measure knowledge, attitudes and practices among teachers, parents and children.
- Stakeholder consultations: engagement with educators, parents and municipal officials to assess programme effectiveness and gather insights for improvement.

Key activities and results

Since the beginning of the project, several notable results have been achieved across multiple dimensions.

Road safety assessments and interventions

- Four comprehensive road safety assessments were conducted (both pre- and post-intervention).
- Three infrastructure interventions were completed, with two additional interventions in progress through the FIA Road Safety Grant Programme.
- A new road map was developed in 2024, incorporating three new localities for road safety interventions.
- Visual infographics featuring these maps were shared with schools, mayors' offices, the Ministry of Education

and Research, and the State Road Administration.

Policy development

- Three rounds of consultations were held with municipal authorities, school administrators and community members on the national extra-curricular educational policy.
- A pre-final version of the 30km/h school zone policy was developed and presented to schools.
- The national extra-curricular educational policy on road safety was officially endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Research (**MER internal order nr 900/20.06.2024**).
- A comprehensive **National Road Safety Programme** (Strategy) was developed with support from multiple partners, including UNICEF.

Educational components

- **110 service providers** were initially trained, with further capacity building planned.
- **18 training of trainers (ToT)** sessions were conducted in 2024–2025, reaching **450 teachers, mentors, police officers and local public administration representatives**.
- More than **200 teachers and 800 pupils in three pilot schools** participated in pre-intervention surveys.
- **Educational materials and equipment**, including high-visibility items, traffic lights demonstrations and posters, were distributed to participating schools.
- **Road safety “corners” or clubs** were established in selected schools.

Community engagement and awareness

- Over **110,000 children** were reached through various awareness activities by February 2025.
- Social media campaigns generated **238,443 impressions**, reached **183,706 people** and achieved **56,534 engagements**.

- **Special events** were organized around key dates, including Children's Day (June 1), Europe Day, Road Safety Week and European Mobility Week.
- **32 social media posts and paid boosting campaigns** were conducted between October and December 2024 alone.

- Direct engagement with over **210 parents/caregivers and 1,900 children/pupils** provided hands-on road safety education.

In total, **7,765 children and 493 teachers directly benefited** from the project's comprehensive interventions, including site visits, assessments and training activities.

Challenges and how they were addressed

Geopolitical disruptions

The major challenge faced during the project was interruptions caused by conflict in neighbouring Ukraine. This influenced supply chains for infrastructure modifications and educational materials, research activities and data collection timelines and disrupted engagement with government officials who were managing multiple crises simultaneously. The project team addressed these challenges by demonstrating flexibility in implementation, adjusting timelines, and leveraging strong partnerships with local stakeholders to maintain momentum despite external disruptions.

Coordination across multiple sectors

Coordinating across various stakeholders presented challenges with aligning goals between multiple ministries, ensuring consistent implementation across diverse localities and balancing the needs of different stakeholders (schools, police, local authorities). This was mitigated through regular and frequent consultation meetings engaging a diverse group of stakeholders (teachers/mentors/police/local public administrators). This was also addressed through maintaining strategic partnerships with key stakeholders at both national and local levels.

Gender imbalance

Initial data showed gender imbalances in participation with 97.2 per cent of teacher respondents being female. The project worked to address this by encouraging more balanced representation in training sessions and engagements throughout the implementation period. The percentage of males improved to 19.2 per cent by the final evaluation.

Lessons learned and future directions

Key lessons learned

Excessive emphasis on individual responsibility can place authorities “on the wrong track”.

The project demonstrated that sustainable change requires policy institutionalization at the

national level. Endorsement of the national extra-curricular educational policy on road safety helped sustainably entrench the intervention.

A high level of community participation is crucial to

success: 85 per cent of parents participated in the awareness activities, 88 per cent of stakeholders believed the project addressed local priorities and as high as 94 per cent supported expanding the project regionally.



Conclusion

The Safe Journeys to School project in Moldova (January 2023 to March 2024) successfully addressed child road safety through a comprehensive approach combining infrastructure improvements, policy development, education and community engagement.

The project achieved a **95 per cent increase in drivers yielding to pedestrians** and **reached over 110,000 children** through awareness activities.

The Safe Journeys to School project in Moldova (January 2023–March 2025) successfully addressed child road safety through a comprehensive approach combining infrastructure improvements, policy development, education and community engagement.

These achievements were made possible through effective partnerships between UNICEF, the Automobile Club of Moldova, government ministries and local administrations, culminating in the official endorsement of a national road safety policy by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Building on these successes, the project has established a foundation for nationwide expansion that should be prioritized for replication in other parts of the country with appropriate adjustments made for contextual relevance that can benefit all Moldovan children. The demonstrated effectiveness of this integrated approach – shifting focus from individual responsibility toward systemic solutions – provides a sustainable model for continued improvement in child road safety throughout Moldova. Despite challenges including disruptions from conflict in neighbouring Ukraine, the project has proven that meaningful progress on child safety is possible through collaborative, evidence-based interventions that create safer environments where children can thrive.

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