

The Problem Statement

Learning Objectives

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- **Identify the key information needed to write a Problem Statement**
- **Use the materials developed during the Mentoring Session to write an effective Problem Statement**



Elements of the Problem Statement

The Problem Statement

- Usually 3-4 paragraphs
- Includes:
 - A description of the problem
 - A summary of the evidence supporting the problem
 - Data visualizations (if appropriate)
 - The impact of the problem on population health and (if appropriate) the economy

***Must convince decision-makers to
take action***

Problem Statement - Outline

- **Define the problem**
 - Clearly identify the policy issue (Problem definition)
- **Describe the problem from a local perspective**
 - Who is affected? (how many people, severity of impact, etc.)
 - What is it costing?
 - What would be the cost of doing nothing?
 - Summarize data analyses / visualizations describing the problem
 - What are the causes of the problem?
 - What has been done locally to address the problem?
- **Describe global, regional, and national burden related to larger public health problem (if relevant)**
 - What is the size/relevance of problem (global, regional, national level)?
 - What has been done on these levels to address the problem?

Case Study Example

Helmet Law Case Study: Problem Statement

Motorcycle Helmets Not Hats

The Case for Enforcing Certified Motorcycle Helmet Use in Vietnam

Summary

- After the passage of Vietnam's 2007 motorcycle helmet law, there was **NO** significant change in the risk of death among motorcyclists (Ho Chi Minh City Study)
- 80% of motorcycle helmets in Vietnam are not certified and hence **NOT** crash-worthy
- Wearing a certified motorcycle helmet can reduce the risk of motorcycle head injuries by 69% and fatalities by 42%
- Increased enforcement by police of the quality of motorcycle helmets is the most cost-effective way to reduce fatalities due to motorcycle crashes



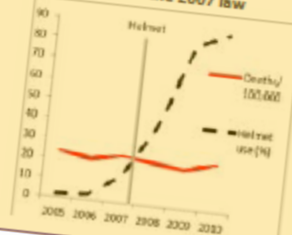
Globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for young people ages 15-29 years, accounting for 1.25 million deaths – more than from violence, HIV/AIDS, and malaria. These deaths are projected to climb from the 9th to 5th overall leading cause of death between 2013 and 2030. In Vietnam, per capita road traffic deaths have remained relatively unchanged between 2001 and 2010 (~13 per 100,000 population), making it one of the deadliest in the Western Pacific region. Motorcycles and mopeds continue to be the vehicle of choice in many low- and middle-income countries, including Vietnam, where they represent 95% of the registered vehicle fleet and are involved in 88% of road deaths from head injuries. Helmets, of certified quality and worn correctly, can reduce the risk of serious injury during a crash by 69% and death by 42%.

Vietnam's 2007 motorcycle law increased helmet use among motorcyclists from 40 to 90%, however the Vietnam Consumer Safety Association found in 2008 that 80% of helmets worn by motorcyclists were not crash-worthy. Without helmet quality enforcement, consumers opt for low-cost, lightweight "paper helmets", leading to ongoing injuries and deaths. Beyond the tragedy of early death, these injuries are costly (~\$2,400 USD in direct medical costs and 54 weeks of lost normal activities from brain injury per person).

Supported by Current Data

A hospital-based study in Cu Chi District found that while helmet use rose from <5% to 88% between 2005 and 2010, there was no significant change in the number of deaths during this time period.

Rising helmet usage did not lead to a drop in deaths after the 2007 law



Use of the Outline in the Case Study

- **Definition**

- Vietnam's 2007 motorcycle law increased helmet use among motorcyclists from 40 to 90%; but 80% of those were not crash-worthy.

- **Local perspective**

- Per capita road traffic deaths have remained relatively unchanged since the law was enacted.
- Enforcement is key.
- Findings supported by hospital-based study in Cu Chi District.

- **Global/Regional /National perspective**

- Road traffic injuries are leading cause of death for young people ages 15-29, accounting for 1.25 million deaths – more than from violence, HIV/AIDS, and malaria.

Problem Statement Criteria

- Definition

- Vietnam's 2007 motorcycle law increased helmet use among motorcyclists from 40 to 90%; but 80% of those were not crash-

Problem Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem/Issue clearly outlined (size, cause, implications) • Describes situation from local perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quantifies the problem, including size and consequences ○ Includes data visualization ○ Describes previous efforts to address issue • Describes issue from a global/regional perspective, if applicable • Describes the impact of the policy issue on health 	
	<p><i>Will the reader agree that the problem being addressed is important, and requires relatively immediate action?</i></p>	

- Road traffic injuries are leading cause of death for young people ages 15-29, accounting for 1.25 million deaths – more than from violence, HIV/AIDS, and malaria.

Group Exercise

Activity: Review Sample Policy Briefs

- **Read, discuss problem statements for the following briefs:**
 - The Price of Smoking: The Case for Increasing Kentucky's Cigarette Tax - USA
 - Policy brief on improving access to artemisinin-based combination therapies for malaria in Burkina Faso
 - Water and Safe Clinics Policy Brief – Sierra Leone (if time)
- **One at a time, please read each brief listed. As you read, think about these questions:**
 - Does the problem statement meet the criteria listed in the Policy Brief Checklist?
 - Is this a format that might work well for your own problem statement?

Your Work Group Assignment

- **Break into your mentor groups and work on your problem statement using the Policy Brief Template**
- **You can continue work on your own this evening**

END