

# Local Speed Limit Setting and Enforcement in the Philippines



An estimated 1.2 million die while over 50 million are injured in road crashes across the world every year. These estimates are expected to increase by as much as 80% in low- and middle-income countries by 2020 due to increasing motorization, if effective road safety interventions are not introduced.

In 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Decade of Action for Road Safety, prescribing a framework designed to curb the rising number of road traffic injuries and fatalities in the world.

Following this, the Philippines' Department of Transportation (DOTr) spearheaded the formulation of the Philippine Road Safety Action Plan (PRSAP) 2011-2020, with the goal of reducing road crashes by 50% by the year 2020.

While the Philippines now has robust road safety policies in place, the number of road crashes continues to rise, according to data from the Philippine National Police (PNP). In 2013, there were 12,875 recorded road crashes in the country. This number rose to 15,572 in 2014, before sharply rising to 24,565 in 2015.

## Framework for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

### 5 Pillars for Road Safety

1. Road safety management
2. Safer roads and mobility
3. Safer vehicles
4. Safer road users
5. Post-crash response

## Road Crashes in the Philippines

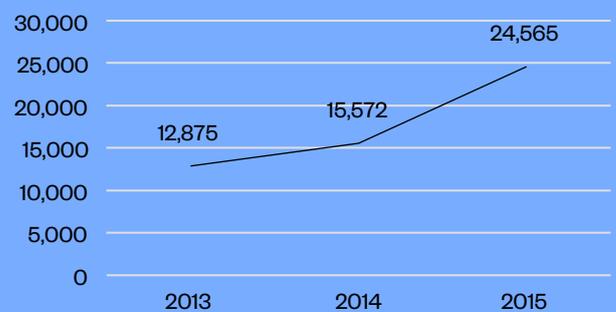


Figure 1. Road crashes in the Philippines

Meanwhile, the WHO estimates that 10,379 died in road traffic crashes in the Philippines in 2013 with an estimated 2.6% GDP lost due to road traffic crashes.

DATA	
Reported road traffic fatalities (2013)	1 513 <sup>b</sup> , (77% M, 22% F)
WHO estimated road traffic fatalities	10 379
WHO estimated rate per 100 000 population	10.5
Estimated GDP lost due to road traffic crashes	2.6% <sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup> 2013, Department of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) –Traffic Accident Recording and Analysis System (TARAS). Defined as death caused by road traffic crash (unlimited time period).  
<sup>c</sup> 2009, Sigua, UP COE/NCTS (ADB Publication).

Figure 2. Road traffic fatalities estimates

In Metro Manila the number of fatalities is rising, from 419 in 2010 to 536 in 2015.

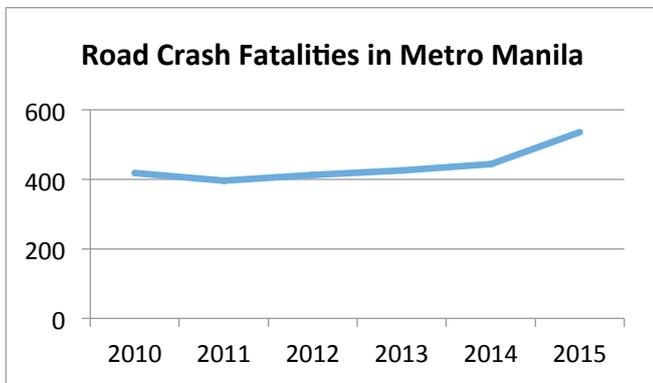


Figure 3. Road crash fatalities in Metro Manila

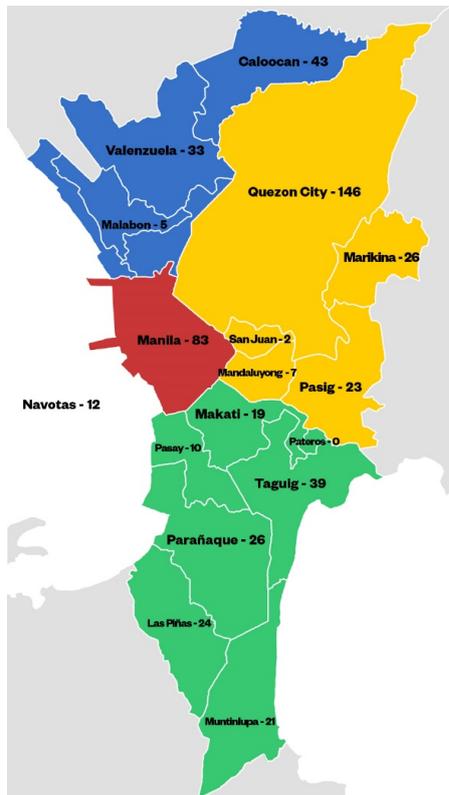
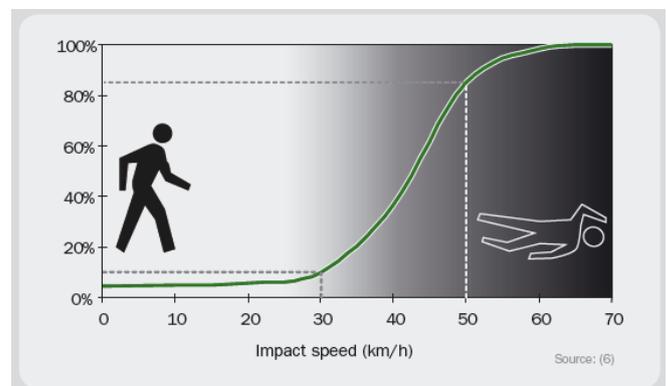


Figure 3. Road crash fatalities in Metro Manila by city in 2015

### Speed Management and Road Safety

According to the WHO, the speed of motor vehicles is at the core of the road injury problem, as it influences both crash risk and crash severity. Speeding is seen as the most important contributor to road fatalities, highlighting the importance of setting safer speed limits and effective speed management.

The aim of speed management is to promote compliance with speed limits in order to reduce the number of road crash fatalities and injuries. A range of tools is employed to achieve this objective. This includes, setting, regulating and enforcing speed limits to modify speeding behavior, public education to change road users' behavior, applying engineering treatments and using infrastructure and vehicle technology. Of these tools, setting speed limits one of the most important, as it is the first step in moderating speeding behavior.



According to the WHO, most vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists will survive if hit by a car at a speed of 30 km/hr, while majority will die if hit at a speed of 50 km/hr.

Figure 4. Probability of fatal injury for a pedestrian colliding with a vehicle.

### Speed Limit Enforcement in the Philippines

The speed limit law of the Philippines is embodied in Republic Act No. 4136 or the Land Transportation and Traffic Code. It prescribes the maximum allowable speeds for all roads within the Philippines and allows local government units to classify roads within its jurisdiction to determine the applicable speed limits.

While the Traffic Code generally meets the legislative criteria prescribed by the WHO in the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015, enforcement of speed limit across the country is rated 5 out of 10 in the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015 based on a self-assessment conducted by the Philippines.

Risk Factor	Legislative criteria				
	National speed law in place	Speed limits on urban roads ≤ 50 km/h	Local authorities have the power to modify national speed limits	Speed limits on rural roads	Speed limits on motorways
Speed	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

Figure 4. Overview of compliance by the Philippines with legislative criteria representing best practices

There are many factors contributing to the low level of speed enforcement in the Philippines. The maximum allowable speed provided in the Traffic Code appear to be ineffective if the roads in the country are not classified, or if local government units do not set local speed limits.

maximum allowable speed limits provided in the Traffic Code is already sufficient, and are not aware of the need to classify roads. Hence, many LGUs merely adopt the maximum speed limits provided in the Traffic Code, without identifying roads as “through streets,” “city or municipal streets,” or “crowded streets.”

Meanwhile, for many LGUs that have enacted speed limit ordinances pursuant to RA 4136 and their power to regulate roads within their jurisdiction under the Local Government Code, it was also observed that enforcement is still low due to lack of technical capacity, capacity to detect violations using speed measurement devices, and inadequate human resources.

Classification	Cars and Motorcycles	Motor Buses and Trucks
1. On open country roads, with no "blinds corners" not closely bordered by habitations.	80 km/hr	50 km/hr
2. On "through streets" or boulevards, clear of traffic, with no "blind corners," when so designated.	40 km/hr	30 km/hr
3. On city and municipal streets, with light traffic, when not designated "through streets".	30 km/hr	30 km/hr
4. Through crowded streets, approaching intersections at "blind corners," passing school zones, passing other vehicles which are stationary, or for similar dangerous circumstances.	20 km/hr	20 km/hr

Figure 5. Maximum allowable speed limits in the Philippines

The applicable speed limits are also not well-publicized with motorists commonly observing that speed limit signs are very rare on Philippine roads.

While local government units are empowered to set local speed limits, many LGUs have neither classified roads nor set speed limits within their jurisdiction because of a general lack of awareness of the need to classify roads or to set speed limits. In a survey of select municipalities, cities, and provinces in the country, to assess local speed limit setting, it was discovered that many LGUs are of the view that the

## Speed Enforcement Strategies in the Philippines

### Davao City

Noting an “alarming, steady increase” in road crashes in Davao city caused by speeding and reckless driving, then Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte issued Executive Order (EO) No. 39 in 2013, setting speed limits for specific roads in Davao City and providing penalties for its violation.

The covered roads were identified based on the number of road crashes and road user mix. To implement the EO, Davao City procured speed guns, installed speed limit signs, and heavily publicized enforcement activities. Law enforcement officers were randomly deployed in the city, with priority given to nighttime operations due to traffic congestion in the city during the day time.

The success of the policy was also heavily publicized. In the first month of enforcement, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte immediately reported a 10 percent decrease in road crashes in Davao City. In 2014, Davao City noted a 42% reduction in road crashes, from 7,000 in January to September 2013 to 4,000 in the same period in 2014. For the entire year of 2014, Davao City saw a 60% decrease in fatal road crashes and a 20% decrease in minor road incidents.

## **Tupi, South Cotabato**

Although the number of registered vehicles in the Municipality of Tupi is not high because its population is small, road crash fatalities have become a growing concern because of the many vehicles that pass through the Municipality via the Pan Philippine Highway. From 2012 to 2013, no less than 200 people have died in Tupi, from over 400 road crashes.

In March 2014, the Sangguniang Bayan of Tupi enacted Ordinance No. 688, setting a speed limit of 40 kph in Pan Philippine Highway.

To detect violations, the municipality purchased four speed guns using the Municipality's Calamity Fund. Additional traffic enforcers were assigned to speed limit enforcement for nighttime operations. Because of inadequate resources, the Municipality of Tupi also sought the assistance of private companies to fund the manufacture and installation of speed limit signs along the covered portion of the Pan-Philippine Highway.

According to Mayor Tamayo, there has been no fatality, and only minor road crashes on the covered road since the ordinance was implemented. However, despite its success in reducing road crashes, the Regional Trial Court of Polomolok, South Cotabato, has nullified the Ordinance, on the ground that the Municipality of Tupi is not allowed to set speed limits on national roads such as the Pan Philippine Highway.

## **Recommended actions to improve road safety enforcement in the Philippines**

Based on a legal and institutional assessment of speed enforcement in the Philippines, the following actions are recommended in order to improve the level of speed enforcement in the Philippines.



### **1. Local speed limit setting through the enactment of ordinances**

According to the WHO's Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015, it is important to give local authorities the power to manage traffic and speed limits within their jurisdictions to ensure that speed limits take into account actual road conditions as well as changes in the road environment.

To ensure that speed limit ordinances will be implemented, we have found that the ordinance must feature provisions on the following:



### **a. Procurement of speed measurement devices by LGUs or the national government**

Without the ability to measure the speed of a vehicle, it would be challenging to hold any driver liable for speeding, even with the presence of Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs). Lack of speed measurement devices would make it difficult to heighten the perceived risk of apprehension of punishment, which is crucial to deter speeding behavior. Hence the speed limit ordinance enacted by the LGU should mandate the procurement of speed measurement devices.



### **b. Appropriation for speed measurement devices, additional human resources, and speed limit signs**

It is important for LGUs to determine the resources available to them before enacting a speed limit ordinance. Once resources are identified, speed limit ordinances should include an appropriation for the purchase of speed measurement devices, additional human resources, and speed limit signs to ensure its effective and immediate enforcement.



### **c. Identification of high crash risk areas**

Given that speed measurement devices and enforcement activities are costly, it is important for LGUs to identify high crash risk areas to enable its law enforcers to efficiently conduct its enforcement activities by targetting these high crash risk areas. Based on actual assessment of select LGUs in the country, it shows that targeted enforcement, though limited in scope, can significantly reduce road crashes.



### **d. Installation of speed limit signs**

The installation of speed limit signs is recommended, given that speed limits may vary depending on the road classification by LGUs and considering that some roads in the Philippines are yet to be classified. Installation of speed limit signs also helps publicize increased enforcement activities.



### e. Publicizing of enforcement activities and results of enforcement activities

LGUs should consider publicizing enforcement activities. Based on the assessment conducted, it appears that reporting on the success of the speed enforcement activities and the apprehension of well-known personalities contribute to the perceived risk of apprehension and the acceptability of speed limit enforcement. The speed limit ordinance should therefore mandate the publicizing of enforcement activities through the appropriate office.



### f. Mandatory collection of crash data and monitoring and evaluation of effect of enforcement activities

Having reliable road crash data allows the LGU to monitor and measure the effect of speed enforcement strategies that it is employing and enables it to publicize the success of activities to gain social acceptability. The Speed limit ordinances should mandate the collection of relevant data by traffic police and the regular monitoring and analysis of the collected data to measure the effectiveness of the speed enforcement activities conducted.



### 2. Issuance of guidelines on local speed limit setting

To guide LGUs in setting local speed limits, guidelines from the appropriate government agencies such as the DOTr and LTO is necessary, as it would ensure that local speed limits comply with the maximum allowable speed limits provided under RA 4136. Having guidelines will also ensure uniformity and predictability of speed limits from one LGU to another.



### 3. Collection of speed limit ordinances and maintenance of centralized database of speed limits

Having a centralized database of speed limits will have several benefits. First, it gives the DOTr and LTO oversight, to ensure that all speed limits comply with the maximum allowable speed limits under RA 4136. Second, it informs the public of the applicable speed limit in all local government units, regardless of the presence of speed limit signs. Third, a centralized database will facilitate national policy-making on speed management.

ImagineLaw, a non-stock, non-profit organization that utilizes its legal and public policy expertise in aid of development in the Philippines, aims to curb the steadily increasing number of road crash fatalities and road crash injuries that claim the life of at least one Filipino every day. We believe that the nationwide enactment of speed limit ordinances is a necessary step in reducing road crashes in the Philippines. As such, we are implementing a project that hopes to encourage other local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines to enact ordinances adopting safer speed limits and to implement speed management measures.

ImagineLaw is developing a template speed limit ordinance that will address some of the identified policy gaps that prevent effective speed limit enforcement. The template speed limit ordinances will also reflect best practices from other countries and local government units with demonstrated success in speed limit enforcement.

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