

## U.S. Embassy Participates in World Day of Remembrance

The [World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims](#) (WDR) was endorsed in 2005 by the United Nations as an “appropriate acknowledgement for

victims of road traffic injuries and their families” to be commemorated annually on the second Sunday of each November. WDR is observed worldwide by many governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations to draw attention to the tragic loss of lives and the emotional and economic devastation caused by road crashes and serve as an opportunity to promote effective actions to save lives on the roads.



**WORLD DAY** FOUNDATION  
**OF REMEMBRANCE**

FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS

ASIRT has long advocated for the participation of United States embassies in World Day of Remembrance programs and activities in their host countries. Last November the United States Embassy in Mozambique became the first US embassy to publicly commemorate this important event.

On November 17, 2022, the United States Embassy in Mozambique held its first World Day of Remembrance for Road Safety event in recognition of road safety as a public health issue. Key speakers included the Ambassador from the United States to Mozambique, **Peter Vrooman**, Director of the Road Safety Division in the Mozambican Ministry of Transport and Communications, **Dr. Fernando Ouana**, and representatives from local road safety NGOs and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



**Arianna Unger**, a Public Health Institute (PHI)/CDC Epidemiology Fellow, delivered opening remarks and described some of Mozambique’s current road safety challenges. Despite having a comparatively low proportion of motor vehicles for its population, Mozambique has an estimated 31.6 road deaths per 100,000 persons, compared to the 26.6 average for all of Africa. Reckless driving (including speeding), poor road infrastructure, insufficient protection for pedestrians, inadequate traffic law enforcement, and absence of timely post-crash emergency care are among the primary reasons for road collisions in the country. Unger also shared the story of her uncle, **Aron Sobel**, who tragically died in a bus crash in Turkey, and how the incident led to the creation of the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT).

Ambassador Vrooman, an avid cyclist, also shared his connection to road safety and noted that several Mozambican government officials, including the Country’s president, **Filipe Nyusi**, had declared road safety a high national priority. Vrooman highlighted efforts by **Mayor Araujo** of Quelimane (the capital city of Mozambique’s Zambezia Province) UN-Habitat and others to make Quelimane the “most bike-friendly city in Africa.” He closed by calling upon attendees to do their part to engage in safe road practices and raise public awareness about road safety.

**João Frio Gimo**, a U.S. Embassy driver hit by a car while cycling off duty, spoke about his long journey to recover from his injuries. He stressed the importance of improving road infrastructure

and driver awareness to prevent future collisions on Mozambican roads. The U.S. Embassy in Mozambique has been working to protect Embassy drivers and passengers by opting into the U.S. State Department's DriveCam program, which records video, audio, and speed data from Embassy vehicles, enabling Embassy driver supervisors to identify hazardous driving practices and provide targeted coaching on safe driving techniques. The program has led to a more than 70 percent reduction in motor vehicle fatalities across participating embassies.

Local non-governmental organizations participated in the World Day of Remembrance event and shared what they are doing to help improve road safety in their communities. **Dr.**

**Alexandre Nhampossa**, Director of the Mozambican Association for Road Crash Victims (AMVIRO), shared that he founded the organization in memory of his sister, who died from treatable crash-related injuries, and with empathy for others who had lost loved ones to similar preventable tragedies. AMVIRO monitors rates of car-on-pedestrian collisions in road crash "hotspots" around the country, trains teachers and community leaders in first aid, supports road crash victims, and raises awareness about road safety issues via social media campaigns.

**Texel Costa**, Country Office Director of Amend Mozambique, also described her organization's ongoing projects, including School Area Road Safety Assessments and Improvements (SARSAI), road safety education programs, safety training for motorcyclists, and the Amend Kid's court, an innovative program in which adults who violate road safety laws are questioned by a jury of specially trained youth in primary schools.

**Dr. Fernando Ouana**, Director of the Division for Road Safety in the Mozambican Ministry for Transport and Communications, closed the event with a review of the national government's work to improve road safety. He discussed the Ministry of Transport and Communication's "Master Plan" to improve road safety, which includes building more sidewalks, developing safer road infrastructure, posting speed limits around school zones and other areas with high pedestrian traffic, increasing lighting along rural roadways, installing speed cameras, and strengthening regulatory enforcement of traffic violations. He noted that, though the government continues to face financial challenges, they are working with partners from the World Bank, China, South Korea, and other foreign missions to support road safety projects on a national scale.

After dedicating a moment of silence to road crash victims, attendees joined to discuss personal experiences with road safety and potential areas of focus for local road safety advocates. Attendees were collectively optimistic that the event would serve as a starting point for future collaboration on road safety projects in Mozambique.

*Arianna Unger is a Public Health Institute (PHI) / Epidemiology Fellow in Mozambique and is the granddaughter of ASIRT's founding president, Rochelle Sobel.*