

Impose heavy penalties on reckless road users, CSOs urge government

By Gertrude Mbago

THE government has been urged to do more to reduce road crashes in the country through imposing heavy punishment and fines on those found causing accidents through recklessness.

The call was made by a coalition of stakeholders from various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who are pushing for the review of road safety laws and policies in the country. They are Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA), Tanganyika Law Society (TALS), Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA), Road Safety Association of Tanzania (RSA) and Tanzania Children Right Forum (TCRF). The stakeholders made the statement as the world was commemorating the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims yesterday.

The World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims takes place on the third Sunday of November every year as an appropriate acknowledgment of victims of road traffic crashes and their families. It was started by the British road crash victims' charity, Road Peace, in 1993 and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005.

Addressing reporters yesterday in Dar es Salaam, Tamwa executive director Edda Sangha said that it was high time for the government to impose stern measures to reduce road accidents which had claimed lives of thousands of people.

According to global statistics from World Health Organisation (WHO), she said, at least 1.24 million people die every year and 20 to 50 million of road crashes.

"Reports from the Tanzania Traffic Road Crashes,"

Police department show that 76 per cent of road accidents are caused by reckless drivers, 16 per cent by wrecked motor vehicles and 8 per cent by infrastructure," she noted.

For her part, Tawla Programme director Nasieki Kisambu said that road accidents were also caused by driving at unmanageable speed, drink driving and medical unfitness of some drivers. She said that all the causes were preventable, urging road users to avoid the causes and the government to take stern measures against abusers of road regulations.

"Coming up with good laws is not enough but sometimes the problems come in implementing them," he added.

The stakeholders want the Road Safety Act to mention the importance of belts to all passengers of any motor vehicles, speeding and the importance of using helmets for all bike users.

According to the coalition, the law remains silent in those areas, saying that it only speaks of drivers while forgetting about the passengers.

Mablezya Rehani, the TLS assistant project officer, called upon the accident victims and the general public to seek legal support from Tanganyika Law Society whenever facing obstacles in getting their rights after accidents.

The director of the Tanzania Child Right Forum, Jones John, pointed out that the major remedy to reduce or even end road accidents was strong laws which go together with their implementation.

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