

From the Editor-in-Chief

This issue of *World Health & Population* presents papers that have been published online by *WHP* and are selected here as representative of recent interesting contributions to the journal. Three of the five articles focus on research in sub-Saharan African countries; one is a study of traffic safety in urban China; and one is a broader study of the provision of short-term medical assistance by outside teams travelling for service trips to resource-constrained, high-medical-need areas.

Domestic partner violence is a serious issue for all countries and cultures. In the first article in this issue of *WHP*, Uthman et al. utilize Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data for 17 sub-Saharan countries to look at dimensions of gender inequality as predictors of acceptance of partner violence as a societal/cultural norm, thus enabling it to occur. Individual-level measures of gender inequality included age, education, employment and presence of more than one wife in the family. Community-level measures included median age of marriage, average household size, and ratio of educated and employed men to women in the community. Finally, the country's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) was included as a societal measure. A number of interesting results are reported, with community and societal measures remaining significant even after accounting for individual factors. This research outcome in particular supports the authors' conclusion that societal-level programs and policy are also necessary if we are going to address what is commonly seen as a private, domestic issue.

The second article in this issue is a brief communication on the state of environmental health at public and private schools in southeastern Nigeria. Both kinds of schools score quite dismally on the school health program evaluation (SHPE) scale, with public schools faring much worse in comparison. Although not an encouraging assessment, this article by Ezeonu and Anyansi provides useful benchmarks going forward, as Nigeria strives to provide a safe, clean, and healthy physical and social environment for all its schools.

"Mortality, Nutrition and Health in Lofa County, Liberia: Five Years Post-Conflict," our third offering in this issue, is a robustly designed study by Doocy, Lewey et al. that provides a public health snapshot from an extraordinarily difficult post-war situation. The area of Liberia that the study examines was among the most terribly affected by the 15-year conflict, with over 90% of the population displaced. According to the study, however, the current population health status in Lofa County is generally comparable with that of the rest of Liberia. The need for reconstruction and development across the country remain very great; data from studies such as this one usefully serve to inform programming by both the government and international aid organizations.

Zhang et al. report in our fourth article on knowledge and awareness interventions for middle- and high-school-aged students in Beijing. Overall, China has experienced a huge increase in motor vehicle use in the last 20 to 30 years, and the country's economic growth promises only more vehicles in the future. China's relative inexperience with vehicular traffic is reflected in the fact that the first national laws relating to road safety were passed only in 2003. This article, "Evaluation of a School-

Based Intervention to Reduce Traffic-Related Injuries among Adolescents in Beijing,” found that knowledge and awareness regarding traffic safety increased in intervention schools, compared with non-equivalent comparison group schools that did not implement the program. Interestingly, results were better for the younger, middle-school student groups, as well as for females as compared to males. The authors conclude that age and gender-specific interventions may be necessary to develop uniform knowledge of traffic safety practices. It is certainly important in any case that driver education efforts be initiated with these populations prior to their taking up the wheel on increasingly crowded Chinese roads.

In the final article in this issue, Chapin and Doocy fill an important gap with the article “International Short-term Medical Service Trips: Guidelines from the Literature and Perspectives from the Field.” Medical service trips are normally seen as clear win-win opportunities – meeting a local medical need, providing a sense of humanitarian service for the visiting medical professionals, providing instruction and training for local healthcare providers, giving the visitor (and possibly his or her spouse) an opportunity to travel, and so forth. Unfortunately, however, the growth of interest in participating in medical missions has not been accompanied by international guidelines and standardization to assure consistent quality in service delivery, outcomes and follow-up. Too often, less-than-qualified people travel with the best of intentions to help and “do good,” but end up being more of a burden than a contributor. This article provides steps to begin to address this problem, among others, identified by the authors regarding medical service projects.

In conclusion, we hope that you find the papers in this issue interesting and worthwhile, and that you will also consult others recently released articles online at www.worldhealthandpopulation.com. *WHP* remains committed to its mission to provide a forum for researchers and policy makers worldwide to publish and disseminate health- and population-related research, and to encourage applied research and policy analysis from diverse global settings. *WHP* is indexed on MEDLINE and is accessible through PubMed.

We look forward to continued enthusiastic submission of manuscripts for consideration, peer review and publication. Finally, the editors and publishers of *WHP* are always interested in any comments or suggestions you might have on the papers or about the journal and our mission. Please feel free to write or e-mail us.

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