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Drunk-Driving in Nigeria and the Need to Strengthen the Enforcement Role of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC)

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Executive Summary

Road traffic crashes are a significant public health problem, resulting in over 1.19 million deaths annually worldwide. In Nigeria, 75-80% of road traffic crashes are caused by human factors such as speeding, reckless driving, and alcohol consumption. Driving under the influence of alcohol increases the risk of road traffic crashes by impairing reaction, judgment, and coordination.

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has put in place various measures to ensure road safety, but there are significant challenges in enforcing laws on drunk driving, which include a lack of breath testing facilities, motivation of personnel, infrastructure, and data management. In Nigeria, the 2007 FRSC Act states that the permissible BAC is 0.5%, but enforcement is poor compared to other African countries. This brief therefore advances the following recommendations:

- i. The House Committee on Federal Road Safety Corps may consider the prioritisation of technological investments, ensuring a dedicated budget line be established within the annual budget of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) for the procurement of certified breathalysers
- ii. The Committee may amend the Federal Road Safety Commission (Establishment) Act 2007 to authorise breath-testing checkpoints nationwide, criminalise refusal to undergo breath testing, and formally recognise breathalyser results as admissible electronic evidence in court.
- iii. The Federal Road Safety Corps may consider establishing a centralised, digital road traffic database linking the Federal Road Safety Corps, hospitals, police, and insurance agencies with the intention of capturing real-time data on alcohol-related accidents, tracking repeat offenders and supporting evidence-based policymaking and enforcement evaluation.

Background

Road traffic crashes are a major public health and development issue worldwide, resulting in an estimated 1.19 million fatalities annually.¹ In addition, road crashes have significant economic and social

implications, such as increased healthcare costs and productivity loss, especially in developing countries. Alcohol-impaired driving is one of the major contributing factors, which affects reaction time, judgment, and coordination. This has a significant impact on the probability of

¹ WHO (2023). Road traffic injuries.
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries/?utm>



crashes and the extent of injuries, which makes drunk driving a major area of concern in road safety.

Reports from the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) indicate that human factors, particularly speeding, reckless driving, and alcohol impairment, account for the majority of road traffic crashes each year, often contributing between 75% and 80% of recorded incidents.² This highlights the need to strengthen the enforcement role of the federal road safety corps to reduce crash rates and improve road safety.

Issue

The Nigerian government, primarily through the FRSC, has adopted a multi-faceted approach to road safety that includes enforced traffic law compliance, public education, digital innovations, strategic safety targets, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. These efforts aim to reduce human-factor crash causes such as speeding and drunk driving, and ultimately save lives on Nigerian roads.³

However, the enforcement of drunk-driving laws in Nigeria is severely hindered by a couple of factors. Institutional capacity challenge, occasioned by limited availability of breathalysers has been a major hindrance. While the Federal Road Safety Commission (Establishment) Act as well as the National Road Traffic Regulations criminalise drunk-driving, and vest on the Federal Road Safety Corps the power of enforcement, carrying out this responsibility by the Corps has been met with the challenge of limited availability of critical breath-testing equipment, such as breathalysers. Existing evidence suggests that, owing to the importance of breathalysers, public donations were recently made to the Lagos State Command in order to boost the existing limited number of the device.⁴ This shortage means that enforcement relies largely on subjective assessments rather than objective testing, leaving many offenders undetected or unprosecuted. One can argue that the limited number of breathalysers may be responsible for the under-reporting of alcohol-related accidents in the country thereby, leading to

² *Pulse News*, (2022, November 2nd). 75% road traffic accidents are caused by human errors – FRSC. <https://www.pulse.ng/story/75-road-traffic-accidents-caused-by-human-errors-frsc-2024072601030651088?utm>

³ *Pulse News*, (2024, September 27th). FCT FRSC targets 50% reduction in road accidents by 2030. [https://www.pulse.ng/story/fct-frsc-targets-50-](https://www.pulse.ng/story/fct-frsc-targets-50-reduction-in-road-accidents-by-2030-2024092701030651088?utm)

[reduction-in-road-accidents-by-2030-2024102810383826602?utm](https://www.pulse.ng/story/fct-frsc-targets-50-reduction-in-road-accidents-by-2030-2024102810383826602?utm)

⁴ Salami M. (2025, April 26th). Firm donates breathalyzers, 100 reflective jackets to FRSC. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/business-services/firm-donates-breathalyzers-100-reflective-jackets-to-frsc/?utm>



low conviction rates due to procedural and evidentiary challenges.

Also, like other African countries, such as Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, Ghana and Rwanda, who have legal provisions stipulating the permissible BAC limit at 0.08%, Section 22 of the Federal Road Safety Commission (Establishment) Act of 2007 clearly stipulates the permissible BAC limit of 0.5%. However, there seems to be an obvious lack of willingness on the part of the corps, which may not be unconnected to the issues of remuneration, motivation and a lack of adequate infrastructure to carry out proper implementation of the law.

Another constraint is the issue of data deficiency. Effective policy implementation requires reliable data. However, data collection and management has constituted a serious challenge in Nigeria thereby affecting the Corps' ability to analyse road traffic data related to alcohol-impaired driving as well as to track repeated offenders.⁵ These gaps highlight a clear need for the holistic strengthening of the Federal Road Safety Corps for effective enforcement of the drunk-driving law.

Areas for legislative intervention

Road traffic crashes remain a major public health concern, with alcohol-impaired driving contributing significantly to fatalities and injuries. Despite ongoing efforts by the Federal Road Safety Corps, enforcement is weakened by inadequate breath-testing equipment, a lack of personnel willingness to enforce the law, and a poor data collection and management system. To mitigate alcohol-impaired driving, it is recommended that:

- i. The House Committee on Federal Road Safety Corps, through its oversight **function**, may consider the prioritisation of technological investments by ensuring that a dedicated budget line be established within the annual budget of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) for the procurement of certified breathalysers, equitably distributed across the various states of the federal, and ensure their routine calibration and maintenance.
- ii. The House committee on Federal Road Safety Corps may amend the 2007 Act to authorise breath-testing checkpoints nationwide, criminalise

⁵ *National Bureau of Statistics*. (2022). Road transport data and traffic crash statistics. Abuja: NBS.



refusal to undergo breath testing, and formally recognise breathalyser results as admissible electronic evidence in court, thereby closing existing enforcement gaps and significantly improving prosecution and conviction rates.

- iii. The committee may mandate the Federal Road Safety Corps to submit quarterly reports to the relevant National Assembly Committees detailing the number of breathalysers procured and deployed, the number of alcohol-related tests conducted over time, the arrests and prosecutions arising from breath

testing, and the corresponding conviction rates to enhance transparency, accountability, and legislative oversight.

- iv. The Federal Road Safety Corps may consider establishing a centralised, digital road traffic database linking the Federal Road Safety Corps, hospitals, police, and insurance agencies with the intention of capturing real-time data on alcohol-related accidents, tracking repeat offenders and supporting evidence-based policymaking and enforcement evaluation.

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