

Background Paper

'National Advocacy Meeting on Road Safety' 2nd February 2017, New Delhi

1. Introduction

Road accidents are now globally recognized as a serious public health problem. More than 1.2 million people die each year on the world's roads, making road traffic injuries a leading cause of death in the world. As per Global Health Observatory (GHO) data in 2013, low- and middle-income countries had higher road traffic fatality rates per 100,000 populations (24.1 and 18.4, respectively) compared to high-income countries (9.2). Almost half of all deaths on the world's roads are among those with the least protection – motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.

Road traffic injuries involve issues of social equity, having a disproportionate impact on the poor in developing countries, where most victims are vulnerable road users (such as pedestrians, children, cyclists and passengers) having less access to medical services, their chances of survival and recovery after crashes are also relatively lower. As per Global Status report on Road Safety 2015, globally, road traffic crashes are a leading cause of death among young people, and the main cause of death among those aged 15–29 years. As people in this age groups are the most economically active are also most affected by road crashes, this is an added burden on poorer countries attempting to tackle poverty and raise levels of economic growth.

2. The Indian Scenario:

In India, according to official statistics 141,526 persons were killed and 477,731 injured in road traffic crashes in 2014 (NCRB, 2015). However, this is probably an underestimate, as not all injuries are reported. The actual numbers of injuries requiring hospital visits may be much more. The situation in India is worsening and road traffic injuries (RTI) have been increasing over the past twenty years. This may be partly due to the increase in number of vehicles on the road but mainly due to the absence of coordinated evidence-based policy to control the problem.

Some startling facts about the road safety issue in India are as below:

- Total number of road accidents in 2015 were 501,423 in 2015, 2.5% up from 2014.
- Persons killed in road traffic crash increased by 4.6% to 146,133 in 2015 from 139,671 in 2014.
- On an average 1,374 accidents and 400 deaths take place every day on Indian roads.
- Over speeding caused 240,463 (47.9%) accidents and 64,633 (44.2%) road deaths.
- Driving under influence of Alcohol/Drugs accounted for 16,298 (3.3%) accidents and 6755 (4.6%) deaths.
- Vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and two-wheeler riders) comprised 63,089 road fatalities.
- Number of persons killed per 100 accidents has increased to 29.1 in 2015 from 28.5 in 2014.
- National Highways accounted for 51,204 (29%) road deaths in 2015 as compared to 47,649 (29.9%) in 2014. State Highways registered 40,863 (28%) deaths last year.
- 54.1% of all persons killed in road accidents were in the 15 -34 years age group during the year 2015.

Traffic police are the source of official government statistics related with road traffic injuries in India. The actual figures may be much more than what is reported.

The economic, social and health losses resulting from road traffic injuries are not inevitable. There is substantial evidence confirming that road traffic injuries can be prevented. A number of factors have been identified as increasing the risk of traffic-related injuries, including inappropriate and excess

speed, non-use of seat belts and child restraints, drinking and driving, non-use of helmets by riders of motorized two-wheelers, poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure and vehicles that are old, not well maintained or that lack safety features.

Regulatory and other actions that address these risk factors have led to dramatic decreases in road crashes in many countries. The provision of emergency trauma care services has also been shown to be important in mitigating the negative impacts of road traffic crashes.

3. Present Context

Over the past decades, many regional and global road safety initiatives have been implemented. These initiatives stress the role of many sectors in the prevention of road traffic injuries and describe the fundamental concepts of road traffic injury prevention, the magnitude and impact of road traffic injuries, the major determinants and risk factors and effective intervention strategies.

Almost a year ago, the ‘Road Transport and Safety Bill, 2015 –Draft was tabled in parliament. To address the issue of road safety and to improve the facilitation of the citizens while dealing with transport department, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways referred it to the Parliamentary Standing Committee and constituted a Group of Transport Ministers (GoM) of the States. The GoM recommended that to address the pressing issue of road safety and improving transport scenario, Government should immediately bring amendments to the present Motor Vehicle Act. On 3rd of August, 2016 Cabinet Chaired by Hon’ble Prime Minister has approved the bill. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture has also had rounds of meetings on the issue and the report of the PSC is expected to be submitted soon. Now it’s the high time that the bill is passed in the Parliament.

4. The National Advocacy Meet

CUTS has been working in the area of Road Safety for more than two decades. Since 2005 onwards CUTS has also been engaging with the parliamentarians through PARFORE (Parliamentarians’ Forum on Economic Policy Issues), a non-partisan informal forum conceived by CUTS. A special meeting of PARFORE on Road Safety issue was organised on 16th of November 2016 in Delhi wherein 9 MPs cutting across party lines participated and contributed.

In the final run up to get the MVA bill enacted, National Advocacy Meeting (NAM) is being organised in New Delhi on 2nd February 2017 and will brought together a cross-section of stakeholders.

The Meeting aims to advocate with the parliamentarians of both lower and upper houses for their support to the bill during debate & voting in their respective houses. It also aim to solicit support of consumer organisations/other relevant organisations working on road safety, road transport authorities, traffic police, concerned citizens and media for being part of advocacy for bill. It focuses on to create awareness about the dire need for the bill and its key highlights among all stakeholders and common public, which will further enhance the demand for speedy enactment of the bill without weakening the envisaged regulatory provisions of it.

As an outcome of this meeting we expect to help overcome the roadblocks in the passage of bill and hope to get a strong bill enacted in near future.