

EVENT REPORT FOR LAUNCH OF THE PROJECT

“TRAFFIC CALMING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN INDIA”

Background

In today's world, the road and transport has become an integral part of every human being. India is witnessing a rapid growth in vehicles in conjunction with the increase in population and urban mobilistaion, which has resulted in high traffic volumes and increased number of road accidents. Road Safety does not happen accidentally, but requires deliberate effort by government and its many partners. Swedish Government in 1970's initiated traffic calming strategies on a large scale, which managed to reduce severe injuries and fatalities for pedestrians by 50 percent and by 70 percent for cyclists in a ten-year period. Looking towards the need of the hour and high significance of the issue, CUTS have conceptualised a unique project in active partnership with the Department of Technology and Society, Lund University, Sweden that is being supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), New Delhi.

Objective

The study aims to highlight the key flaws in design of Indian road and develop a manual, **first of its kind in India**. The manual will contain suggestions/recommendations up on “remedial traffic calming strategies” for concerned policy/decision makers, primarily in the departments of Police, Transport, Municipal Corporation, Development Authority and Public Works. Experiences from Sweden and other countries clearly demonstrate the relevance of these strategies. Under this project twenty-four sites out of six locations shall be studied for a detail investigation of road crashes involving pedestrians.

The project was formally launched on Monday, March 03, 2008 at 3.00 p.m. at the Conference hall (Royal Court), Hotel Country Inn, Khasa Kothi Circle, M.I. Road, Jaipur. Transport Department Shri Jagdish Chandra presented the keynote speech followed by the expert comments of DIGP Traffic Shri Kumar Indu Bhushan. Representatives from Transport Department, Nagar Nigam, Jaipur Development Authority, Malviya National Institute of Technology and Traffic Police Department graced the occasion. Among several, representatives from prominent NGOs that are involved in road safety issues like Muskan and Dr.M N Tondon Memorial Charitable Trust were also present there.

Proceedings

Mr. Pradeep S Mehta, briefing about CUTS involvement in road safety, opened the meeting with welcome and introductory remarks. He also told that a study in 1990, on road safety became the basis for the National Road Safety Policy adopted by the Government of India in 1993. A paper was released ‘Right to Life and Safety on Roads’ and became the basis for the first-ever road safety policy of the country and also about a number of studies CUTS has made including the problems like overloading of jeeps and section 134 of Motor Vehicle Act 1988.

Shri Jagdish Chandra, Transport Commissioner of Rajasthan, presented the keynote address and mentioned that the Finance department in principal has agreed for the proposal that composition money recovered from challans worth Rs 50 crore may be utilized for procurement of basic road safety equipments. He also commented that a person found driving without **License** should be put behind the bars by law (section 3 & 5 of Motor Vehicle Act 1988) for 3 months, which is not being followed. According to him at least 15 days imprisonment should be compulsory in such cases. Moreover he stressed on the enforcement of laws and driver's education to be more effective.

Shri Kumar Indu Bhushan, Dy. I G Police, Traffic, also providing his views said, “there is no more possibility of improving the roads further. We have already widened the roads up to the maximum, now we need some other alternatives to overcome road safety problems and check speed of vehicles. By improving the road surface quality and building flyovers we are allowing people to drive at higher speeds which result in higher rate of accidents.”

Prof. Christer Hyden from Lund University, Sweden, Prof Dinesh Mohan and Prof. Geetam Tiwari from Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme (TRIPP), IIT Delhi presented the need of the project “ Traffic Calming Strategies to Improve Pedestrian Safety in India” in a global perspective. The data from a recent study from IIT, Delhi shows that **Jaipur is at third place in list of total number of road accidents in India**. Giving a clear picture of road users Prof Geetam Tiwari, mentioned the major responsibility of providing physical facilities that encourage pedestrian travel and help protect the pedestrian, resides with traffic engineers. The psychology of pedestrian has also to be kept in mind before designing a new system. Prof. Hyden mentioned that proper implementation of Traffic Calming Strategies has reduced fatal accidents by 50 percent and serious injuries by 70 percent in Sweden in a period of only ten years. He stated that merely changing the existing zebra crossings to raised zebra crossings; the risk of accidents is reduced by 40 percent.

A training programme was also scheduled along with this launch, which continued on March 4, at the conference hall of CUTS-CITEE (CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment). The objective of this two days training was to guide site selection process to the Indian team. Prof. Christer Hyden along with Prof. Geetam Tiwari and Prof. Dinesh Mohan explained various issues important for selecting a site. They shared their experiences gathered through studies in different states of India and abroad. To identify the high accident risk zones, a detail study of total number of pedestrian accidents in a year shall constitute the first step. The study of human behaviour in different traffic conditions shall also be an integral part of this project.

Key Comments

The comments/statements of the speakers and participants gathered during the meeting are assembled as follows:

- Transport Commissioner Shri Jagdish chandra has asked various NGOs involved in road safety, to prepare a plan of action for road safety for Jaipur city. He also mentioned that NGOs working for road safety shall put their efforts jointly in this concern.
- Prof. Christer Hyden mentioned chaos on the roads to be good regarding safety because it results in low speeds and alert road users (“careful” road users). He added that study of conflicts is the only way we can come to efficient traffic calming in India.
- Professors from IIT, Delhi presented some facts regarding Indian accident statistics and the road user psychology. Prof. Dinesh Mohan commented that if the Government wishes to increase road crashes, only then, they should build flyovers. Hence there is a great need to revise our policies in favour of road safety. Prof. Geetam Tiwari added that out-of the total people killed in road accidents, 78 Percent are the pedestrians. Safe public transport implies safe pedestrian infrastructure. Promotion of public transport is only possible if pedestrians and bicyclists are safer which includes safe access to bus stops.