

# Webinar on Ensuring Road Safety on the Streets through Speed Management in India May 20, 2021




## Background

The UN Global Road Safety Week was from May 17-23, 2021 and the theme for this year is Streets for Life: #Love30. In India and at CUTS, the week was commemorated despite the pandemic limitations.

It is a fact that assessing the risk of death in road traffic is fundamental to achieve the SDGs, especially those affecting health security, poverty and reducing inequalities within the countries.

The Government of India and various State Governments are taking strides in tackling the challenge of road safety. As committed by Shri Nitin Gadkari ji, reducing road accidents and fatalities up to 50 percent by 2025 is quite encouraging.

The road safety laws and policies that tackle the impact of road traffic and create environments for safe, sustainable and inclusive transport options have been amended. But a paradigm shift is needed for how streets are designed, starting with low speeds



where people and traffic are mixing, to make the streets safe, accessible, enjoyable and equitable for all road users.

It is evident that streets with a 30 km/h (20 mph) speed save lives and protect road users, especially the most vulnerable, like pedestrians, cyclists, children, older people, and people with disabilities.

In this context, CUTS International organised this webinar to discuss the issues and challenges related to the theme.

## Panellists


1. Nalin Sinha, Country Representative, Global Health Incubator of India (GHAI), India
2. Gaurav Gupta, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Government of India
3. Bhargab Maitra, Professor, Civil Engineering, IIT Kharagpur
4. T Elangovan, Executive Director, KRSA, Government of Kerala
5. Virendra Rathore District Transport Officer (DTO) Bhilwara, Rajasthan
6. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International (Moderator)

## Proceedings

**Cheriyan** moderated the session and delivered his opening address. He briefly touched upon the webinar objectives and explained the context. UN Global Road Safety Week is celebrated every two years. The theme of this year's week is Streets for Life. The theme of the week's campaign is based on the Stockholm Declaration of 2020, advocating for 30 km/h speed, where people and vehicles mix.

He also reminded the audience how the streets are generally considered public places, to walk, cycle, shop, or participate in social activities, used by children and common people, and how even many of us had played gully cricket or football on streets. He elaborated this to substantiate that everyone has a right to feel safe on the streets.

Referring to the MoRTH Report, 2019, George highlighted that the road accident kills almost 1.51 lakh people annually in India. Over-speeding is the primary cause of road accidents that accounts for 71 percent of crashes, 67.3 percent deaths and 72.4 percent injuries. National Highways accounts for 73.5 percent of accidents due to overspeeding. Young adults in 18-45 years accounted for nearly 69.3 percent of road accident victims. The vulnerable road users accounted for 54 percent of the total road accident deaths.



Low speed streets are key in achieving Vision Zero, which aims to prevent a single death in the road transportation system. Reducing vehicle speed can prevent crashes from happening and can reduce the impact. An average 1 km increase in speed can increase three percent in crashes, Cheriyan further said.


**Sinha** said during the last few decades, road traffic injury has become an important public health challenge globally. Road traffic crashes are responsible for the untimely death of over 1.35 million and the injury of over 20 million people every year in the world. According to WHO, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5-29. India registers over 150,000 deaths annually. Also, around half a million people get injured and 30 percent of them with some disability and need long-term hospitalisation and medical care.

In the last three years alone, between 2017 and 2019, the country witnessed over 4 lakh fifty thousand deaths and around 14 lakh injuries due to road accidents. And over-speeding was found to be the leading cause of around 3 lakh deaths and 10 lakh injuries. Untimely and preventable deaths are devastating for families and our nation.

He further added evidence and policy reform from several countries to suggest that road crash injury and death can be prevented or reduced significantly with good legislation backed by effective enforcement and awareness programmes on the ground. Therefore, all the stakeholders must come together and work in a collaborative and well-coordinated manner to save precious human lives. The government and road enforcement agencies should consider reducing the speed limit for motor vehicles on highways and urban areas and drawing lessons from many countries that reduced speed limits and succeeded in bringing down road crash burden.

At the same time, **Gupta** acknowledged that data collection of road accidents had become an issue and MoRTH is working on this area. An integrated Road Accident Database is being developed, which will enable the collection of accident data on the spot. This will help in analysing the causes of road accidents and help reduce fatalities. This real-time data collection is already implemented in six states.

He highlighted various initiatives and programmes on road safety. MoRTH is working on a school curriculum to teach safer behaviour on the road in the mind of children. The Safer Roads resource aims to promote healthy, safer lifestyles in young children by fostering positive health and safety attitudes and behaviours that can inform and enhance their own quality and other people's lives. Using new technology can also contribute to prevent and reduce the number of road-related accidents and improve road safety, he added.



**Maitra** spoke about the Speed Facility Development in India and underlined the importance of traffic accessibility functions to ensure road safety on roads. He touched upon various speed management engineering tools and methods like recording and reporting methods, electronic monitoring of speed. Finally, he also stressed on the need for capacity building of all the enforcement officials and policymakers on evidence-based speed management in India.

He further added the need for speed management policies to enhance road safety in India. Speed management is vital for our country as most roads, especially highways in India, are not fully access controlled. Roads are marked by mixed traffic, absence of lane discipline, roadside development and activities. He also cautioned that drivers usually do not recognise the risks involved in speeding and almost 40-50 percent of drivers exceed the speed limit. The higher the speed of a vehicle, the shorter the time a driver has to stop and avoid a crash. Unfortunately, it is the vulnerable road users, primarily pedestrians, cyclists, and two-wheelers, who account for almost 54 percent of all fatalities and serious injuries.

**Elangovan** spoke about speed control and speed management-related measures taken by the Government of Kerala. He mentioned that the most adversely affected road users from high speed are the vulnerable road users. He highlighted the utility of Traffic Control Devices, Centrally monitored Traffic Signal Systems, and enforced speed limits through GPS and speed governors. He also shed light on the positive outcome of Safe Kerala Corridors, which are now five in number and more to be scaled up soon. Elangovan also stressed on various engineering methods being enforced in Kerala, which are constructing rumble strips, bumps, school zone treatments, proper road markings and signage, etc.

He said pedestrians and bike riders are the most affected road users; hence, a meaningful Road Safety Management should reduce the impact on Vulnerable Road Users. He highlighted the Safe Kerala Project - A Flagship Programme of Kerala. It is a mission mode Enforcement Activity funded by Road Safety Authority. He also spoke about speed calming to provide safe access to pedestrians, cyclists, and residents. He further said that speed calming locations must be clearly demarcated.

**Rathore** spoke about the key provision of Government of India's speed notification of 2018, Indian Road Congress-00 provisions, Speed Alarming system, Crash Data Retrieval (CDR) systems, Speed Limit Display System, Section 112 and 183 related provisions of MVA Act, 2019, various types of speed limits including the temporary speed limits being set for one month only and Motor Vehicle Driving Regulations which are related to speeding, etc. He also mentioned his speed calming innovating initiatives being enforced in his jurisdiction of Bhilwara district in Rajasthan.



## **Vote of Thanks**

In the end, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Senior Programme Officer, CUTS International summed up the webinar and proposed a vote of thanks to participants and speakers. He said that it is the first time that CUTS and Road Safety Network, India organised a dedicated webinar on speed management in India. He thanked all the panelists and participants from diverse backgrounds like Government, Enforcement Officials, Media, Road Safety experts and CSOs from more than 10 states of India.

CUTS is an international consumer organisation currently working in four states and at the national level on Road Safety. CUTS is part of the Road Safety Network, a coalition of national leaders working together to advocate for an evidence-based approach to saving lives on Indian roads. The Network is committed to advancing policies that strengthen road safety.