

SAFER ROADS: EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Dr Mridul Bhasin

Muskaan: Foundation for Road Safety

45-A, Hathroi, Jaipur

jaipurmuskaan@gmail.com

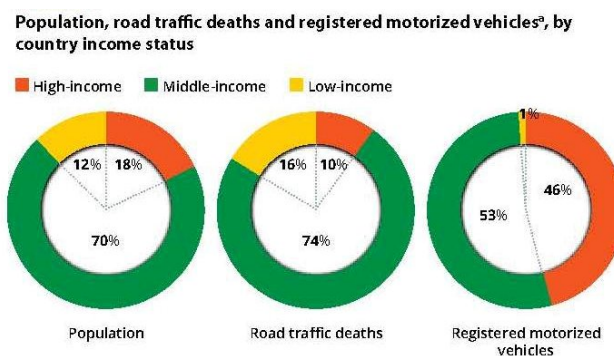
Road transport and mobility are the prerequisites to any modern economy and these are an essential factor that contribute significantly to economic growth, well being and social development of a country as these create access to markets, jobs, education and health care. In India we have mixed levels of progress, education and perceptions too in urban and rural areas making it difficult to address what the World Road Meeting 2017 is all about.

As a not for profit organization, we believe that the thriving populations of our country need a basic understanding of what is road Safety. A sense of being a stakeholder demands change in a road user's attitude for traffic safety. This change has to start early in life from family to school and from school to the point when one is ready for a learning and then a permanent licence. Education and awareness at this level work to change attitudes. The efforts to spread road safety awareness are well defined in the National Road Safety Policy Statement made by Indian Government. The Policy Statement says that road safety knowledge and awareness will be created amongst the population through education, training and publicity campaigns. It highlights specifically that road safety education will focus on school children and college going students, while road safety publicity campaigns will be used to propagate good road safety practices among the community.

In a vitally important statement the policy further reiterates that the Government will encourage all professionals associated with road design, construction, road network management, traffic management and enforcement need to attain adequate knowledge of road safety issues. Road designing professionals, the construction engineers and traffic enforcement agencies have to see the direct connection their work has to accidents and fatalities. The professionals involved in mobility management too have to be made conscious of their work's impact on human lives. It is not the sole domain of schools children and general populace.

As defined by the United Nations the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets include two targets that relate to road safety, one in SDG 3 which relates to health and one in SDG 11 which relates to transport for sustainable cities. It acknowledges that there is a strong scientific base around what works, as evidenced through the success of a number of countries in reducing the burden of road traffic deaths. It also recognizes the importance of this issue to broader global health and development.

The effort to build sustainable cities seems unachievable when we look at the fact that the low- and middle-income countries like us bear a disproportionate burden of road traffic deaths. Ninety-percent of road traffic deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries while they also account for 82% of the world's population, they nevertheless bear a disproportionate number of deaths relative to their level of motorization. This category accounts for only 54% of the world's registered vehicles.



The National Road Safety Policy of India has based its targets on the factors outlined in the findings of world organizations. As the WHO Report 2015 elaborates, achieving sustained reductions in road traffic injuries requires countries to have a long-term vision and strategy for road safety. The process requires considerable degree of stakeholder engagement at the national level so that all relevant sectors – health, transport, police, and nongovernmental agencies and all categories of road users – invest in a strategy to make it a success. All these factors link up with the issue of being an aware road user.

In India, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has time and again issued instructions to various stakeholder departments and states to have an alert policy on road safety. As far as IEC activities go the most visible and effective efforts seen are in the Education departments of all most all the states of India. It is in this sector that the non governmental agencies have a good access and outreach. This sector represents the future citizens and road users and it offers ideal ground to generate awareness and road safety education to the young citizens from the early stages of schooling. The sector of youth and students have to have a deep sense of safe traffic which is essential to an organized society. This very generation goes to become planners, bureaucrats, politicians and opinion makers. With a good sense of road traffic and safety and its importance, one would expect better commitment to policy execution and better approaches to planning, legislation, traffic plans, enforcement and health.

Some 18 years back Muskaan Foundation for Road Safety started as a fledgling organization gradually working with schools. It gained ground slowly as it evolved as a mature organization and went on to cover not just the school kids, but also college youth, engineering students, corporate executives, police personnel, Public Works Department engineers, political leaders, rural officials and the average citizens too.

IEC AND EDUCATION AMONGST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

Muskaan Foundation has imparted Road Safety Training to students from class 1st to 12th standards basing its efforts on the well tested premise of *learning through doing*. The process involves children in the issue of road safety through curriculum, interactive activities like films, quiz, debates, paintings, projects, singing and poster making at every learning curve which has relevance to that particular age group. Road Safety Clubs are a tool for students to have active participation in the issue of road safety year round. In our education and awareness generation processes we use *the idiom the youth use*. Sparing the youth the tiring lectures, Muskaan engages them in practical exercises like organizing a

Road Safety Carnival that engages more than 1500 students as *doers and watchers*. In this exercise with a single focus on road safety, the student groups do street plays, sing jingles, organize quiz contests, paint, debate, dance, show films they have made and hold discussions – all in a single day designated for the issue.

Road safety education and awareness drives are done by Muskaan regularly in colleges as they are the hub of the fast moving youth using motorcycles. Muskaan's efforts have generated wide spread awareness about road safety amongst youth and our team is invited to participate in the youth Festivals of various Indian Institute of Technology (IITS), the top notch institutes in India.

Specifically popular are the three hour practical demonstrations of *How to ride safe* that are held in colleges and Universities with hundreds of students registering in the demonstration with their bikes, quality helmets and age certification. These demonstrations are organized by the Muskaan team in association with experts from motor cycle companies who fulfil their corporate social responsibility through their support to us. Students thus gain knowledge and learn of pit falls of unsafe riding. So far the organization has worked with approximately 100 institutes and touched base with more than 1000,000 students since 2010.

	
<p>Two wheeler Safe Drive Training</p>	
	
<p>Interaction with students of a school for underprivileged at Bhakrota, rural area, Jaipur</p>	<p>Kautalya College of Engineering, Jaipur</p>

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS THROUGH COMMUNITY

As one of the fastest growing cities of world, Jaipur, the capital city of state of Rajasthan, India is working to make the city a world class city and accordingly infrastructural developments are happening in the city and the state. In the year 2010 the government decided to make 7 kilo meters of the total planned 37 kilo meters of the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) route operative at the Sikar Road. Within a period of 2 years, the route saw more than 200 accidents and approx 45 deaths causing concern for all. It was in 2013 that Muskaan Foundation submitted a project to Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) with a specific objective to reduce fatality by 10 % in 12 months on this particular BRTS route.

Muskaan's *Sikar Road BRTS Community Project* exemplifies how a long standing life threatening situation can find a solution through a comprehensive, inclusive approach involving all segments responsible for traffic, road safety and community. The list of stakeholders given here below, involved in the project shows the wide range of approach used in the project. The list included the following:

- Jaipur Development Authority Engineers
- Transport Department
- Traffic Police
- Educational Institutions in the Sikar Road Area
- Public Representative of the area
- Business Associations
- Industries' Associations
- Resident Associations and
- Hospitals and Clinics

The project took up detailed Site Audits with experts from Intercontinental Consultants & Technocrats Pvt. Ltd. (ICT) working with the organization. This involved coordination with Jaipur Development Authority engineers for engineering fault corrections. The site showed clear lack of enforcement so a regular coordination with Traffic Police for strengthening enforcement was taken up. Liaison meetings with hospitals and emergency service providers helped in building efficient emergency response capacity in the area. Education and awareness drive on '*Safe use of BRTS*' in educational institutions and factories, Business Associations, Residents' Societies and Vyapar Mandals around the area generated consciousness amongst road users.

AWARENESS AND FOCUS ON ROAD SAFETY ISSUES IN POLITICAL DOMAIN

A special part of the project was getting the Public Representatives and Members of Legislative Assemblies involved in the community project. The Ward Members, Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament are the social and political tools for change in society. Accordingly, various governance driven advocacies found an effective voice through them during the project period in the project year.

As shown here below, the project brought down the accident and fatality rate considerably in the 7 kilometers of the project area within a span of one year. BRTS-Sikar Road (7-kms) Accident Data* from January-December 2013

Year	No. of Accidents	No. of Deaths
2011	85	28
2012	65	12
2013	28	6

THE RURAL SECTOR AND ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS:

In the fast growing economy of India, the Prime Minister's Grameen Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has increased the outreach of the most sophisticated modes of transport to the rural sector. This has given a boost to the rural development while adversely creating a rise in road traffic crashes alongside.

It is logical to refer to the report of the Transport Research Wing that covers virtually all aspects of road accidents. The Report for 2015 says rural areas continue to be more hazardous, accounting for 53.7 per cent of road accidents in 2014. Fatalities, 59.4 per cent and injuries, 58.0 per cent, were also higher in rural areas than the 40.6 per cent fatalities and 42.0 per cent injuries in urban areas. This indicates the need for a significant improvement in infrastructure for reducing accidents in rural areas. Rural areas had 262,985 road accidents in 2014 while urban areas had 226,415. The shares of accidents in rural and urban areas were 53.7 per cent and 46.3 per cent, respectively.³

When we talk of rural sector, the grass root governance bodies are the Panchayats. In India, these governance bodies work for implementing the policies and welfare schemes of the government for the rural populations. A rural area specific module to educate the Panchayat, Dairy Federations members, school teachers, Gram Sevaks, owners of village dhabas and shops needs to be used. This kind of outreach would really be effective as the accidents rates in the rural sector in India are high. To turn the tide of road accidents it is necessary to focus on educating the youth, the professionals and the governance bodies in the rural sector.

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organisation, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015 page.4
2. Data received from the office of the Additional Director General of Police (Traffic) Rajasthan, Jaipur
3. The Transport Research Wing Report 2015. Transport Research Wing (TRW) of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, India is the nodal agency for providing information and data on various aspects of road safety.