



FOREWORD

Health sector, together with its partners from related sectors along with international cooperation has been successful in reducing the burden of some communicable and infectious diseases in the last decade. At the same time, India has been emerging as one of the super powers in economic and technological growth. This growth is also accompanied with automobile revolution and infrastructure development, more visible in urban India. In this pace of growth and development, every day an estimated 275 persons are killed and 4100 injured on our roads. This epidemic of Road Traffic Injuries (RTIs) and deaths is not only limited to India, but seen in many developing countries of the world: a grim reminder to the fact that if transportation and infrastructural growth is not accompanied with safety at all levels, many more young and productive lives will be lost in India during the days to come.

The number of vehicles has increased from 19 million in 1990 to 67 million in 2003, with nearly 75 % being two wheeler vehicles alone. India is witnessing the advent and presence of most swanky cars and other automobiles along with bullock cars and bicycles on its roads in its limited road space. This struggle by different vehicles and its owners for road usage in a heterogeneous traffic presents set of complex problems, unseen in developed parts of the world. The increase of RTIs is one example of this chaotic growth on our land. At the same time, technologies and solutions developed in the west cannot be merely implanted on the Indian soil as our society is at a different phase of growth and development. This unique situation and challenge calls for formulating road safety policies, programmes and implementable and sustainable action plans based on innovative solutions from every segment of our society.

The death of more than 1,00,000 persons, serious injuries among 15 million people and loss of nearly 3 % GDP every year is a serious issue for consideration of everyone. Indian states that are growing fast on economic parameters are also witnessing high rate of road traffic deaths, injuries and disabilities. This carnage on the roads can be prevented even with existing knowledge of today, while more investments need to be made for better understanding of issues and developing more culture specific solutions. Any road safety policy and programme should be developed on good quality and reliable information and not on adhoc, knee jerk and crisis oriented approaches. We need to move from reactive interventions to more proactive solutions. The present India Road traffic Injury report by the Department of Epidemiology and WHO Collaborating center for injury prevention and safety promotion at NIMHANS has brought together available evidence on burden and impact of RTIs along with several cost effective solutions for implementation by policy makers. If we do not address this epidemic of RTIs at this stage, many more lives will be lost and

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As India moves forward in its quest for growth and development with visible changes in technology, automobile growth, infrastructure expansion and economic growth, an untold misery is also coming to the forefront. While the significant contributions of health sector, their partners and international cooperation has resulted in saving lives of millions of children, lakhs of young lives are succumbing to injuries, specially Road Traffic Injuries (RTIs) every year in India. As per estimates, more than 1,00,000 persons have lost their lives and 15 million people were hospitalized in health care institutions across the country during the year 2005. Nearly one third of disabilities were due to RTIs. It is estimated that the country is losing more than Rs. 55,000 crores or nearly 3 % of GDP every year. Majority of those killed, injured, disabled are young and productive members of the country, a serious loss to the nation indeed.

The number of vehicles has increased by nearly 4 times, from 19 million in 1990 to 67 million by 2003. The infrastructural development and safety on Indian roads has not kept pace with this unanticipated increase in automobiles. With nearly 75 % being two wheeler vehicles alone, India is facing the unique challenge of different type - size - velocity vehicles on its roads with a mix of different categories of road users. The accompanying and emerging conflicts among road users, seen commonly on Indian roads, has not been experienced by any High Income Countries of the world. Consequently, road deaths on Indian roads have just doubled in the same period from 54,000 in 1990 to more than 1,00,000 by 2005. Increase of RTIs is one example to highlight that safety needs to be given highest priority. There are several time tested and cost effective solutions, understood by research over 3 - 4 decades in the developed countries, applicable to countries like India and lives can be saved. Caution also has to be exercised in transfer of technology from developed countries as they cannot be merely implanted elsewhere

The present scenario calls for formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating scientifically developed road safety policies and programmes in India. Road safety should be given due importance in the pathway of growth and development. As India emerges as a super power in economic and technological growth, young minds and human resources are an asset to the society. To achieve safety on Indian roads and to develop strategic action, the present report was commissioned by WHO to bring together present understanding on burden and impact of road traffic injuries along with several cost effective solutions for implementation by policy makers. The report lays down a road map for future activities to strengthen road safety in India. This man-made tragedy need not repeat on a day to day basis and can be predicted and prevented. Our efforts behind bringing this report will be amply rewarded, if society at large makes a determined and

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