

# ACHIEVING SDGS FOR ROAD TRAFFIC INJURY CALLS FOR A STRATEGIC VISION IN GOVERNANCE

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Road traffic injuries across the world have worsened to crisis levels over the years. The years leading into 2030 do not represent encouraging signs in achieving the ambitious targets laid out through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 3.6 of SDG 3 aims to halve the number of global deaths and road traffic injuries by 2020 and target 11.2 of SDG 11 aims to provide access to safe and sustainable road transport systems. While the targets stand ambitious to achieve given that 2020 is just around the corner, realistically achieving SDG 3 and 11 targets calls for visionary governance that requires strong leadership and committed engagement, nevertheless. The proliferating economic, migratory, demographic and human development serves to increase the burden of road fatalities as country governments shift focuses on number of overlapping priorities.



Rajeev was a daily wage labourer working in a construction firm and living with his family members. One day while being transported to work station, due to a negligent over-speeding bus, his vehicle career met with an accident. Rajeev and his 2 colleagues died on the spot and the other one who was injured died after few days in the hospital, leaving behind his wife and 2 children to face an insecure future. Multiple questions start getting raised. Would road safety regulation and implementing strict legislation have prevented an accident? Could better roads have ensured the accident never took place? A better trauma care and a well prepared health system could have possibly have saved some of them? These are questions which low- and middle-income countries find difficult to answer and governance commitment remains of questionable repute. Take for example, the famous Pumpwell bridge in Mangalore City in India. The construction of the bridge has been going on since over 8 years now and the people of Mangalore have been highly ignorant, partly indifferent to the nature of development taking place. The city also has a smart city tag but has one of the worst roads in the world. Imagine a supposedly smart city surrounded by educational institutions, banks and public sector companies having the worst roads possibly in the world. Many of the roads also merge with national highways and spring surprises with potholes all over. Move to other parts of the region, sudden surprising speed breakers with no paint are placed which sends highway vehicles for a toss. This calls for sincere governmental development.

Many of these projects in developing quality roads are funded by tax-payers money and by multi-lateral development banks often at times through government pressure around the world, but the accountability that stands into ensuring safe passages remains a distant thought process.

Protecting vulnerable groups like school children, elderly populations and young men remain necessary as the risk of dying among them is higher. Ensuring tougher legislations for vehicle manufacturing companies to ensure standards and quality vehicle body with tax benefit perks will encourage innovation and competition. Supporting non-government organizations to enhance campaigns around road safety will build an inner awakening.

Engaging local city municipalities in building a sustainable city vision and creating friendly neighbourhood and effective transport systems will facilitate an intersectoral developmental

framework towards achieving aspirations among the stakeholders.

Investment in road infrastructure must not just seek to accommodate more cars and reduced congestion, but rather also work to reduce injuries and death, improve health systems preparedness towards managing trauma care, protect pedestrians and vulnerable populations, reduce air pollution which has far reaching health impacts and create an inclusion based, non-siloed approach to achieving targets.

Often at times, a victim of a road accident may never return home in the same way in which one left the home. The cruel burden of governance neglect will fall upon the members of the family who will bear the brunt of this peripheral viewed concern.

It is therefore morally calling for each of us to make a case for Sustainable Road Safety Goals for 2020 and all member states must rise up to delivering effective road transport systems which keeps safety at the heart of development and sustainability.

*Credits: The Times of India*