

## **Taking Corporate Social Responsibility – SAFE ROADS in India and China**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Based on official WHO statistics more than 1 million people lose their lives in traffic accidents every year. And the amount is increasing. Especially in developing countries the situation gets more and more dramatic. India has the highest number of reported road traffic fatalities in the world, about 147 000 deaths in 2015, which means 11% of all worldwide. This equals with at least 17 people dying on the roads every hour!

Key factors for a continuous upwards trend of fatalities are related to an increasing vehicle fleet, a high number of vulnerable road users, driver behavior, infrastructure and vehicle factors. In order to bring down fatality rates in developing countries and to improve safety additional efforts need to be taken into account besides new car assessment programs.

In 2015 Daimler has started a unique CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiative to increase the safety awareness in India, called SAFE ROADS. The objective is to convey importance of basic and enhanced safety through exhibits and key presentations. The initiative visited eight cities all over India, starting in New Delhi in April 2015. With several presentations at universities and malls safety topics were not only communicated but also demonstrated via exhibits. To reach the Indian public also elements such as TV panel discussion and live radio broadcasting were included in the different events. Several exhibits like the Experimental Safety Vehicle “ESV 2009”, a crash test vehicle, a belt sled and a body in white model gave the possibility to address safety and allow personal “touch&feel” experience for the audience.

The presentation during the ESV conference will give an insight view on the approach as well as on key learnings made during the last 2.5 years. It will show how the target - an increased safety awareness of Indian public in behavioral aspects as well as an enhanced understanding of the potentials and limitations of vehicle safety systems – could be reached and what further steps are taken to establish sustainable measures in India and how the concept was transformed to a new approach for SAFE ROADS in China. It is also focusing on main challenges in these countries and which have to be taken care of at first hand in order to generate quick wins.

To improve global safety it is important that everyone takes responsibility and contributes. Especially for developing countries we need to find, share and discuss measures that support this goal continuously.

## MOTIVATION

More than 1.2 million people are dying on the roads worldwide every year. Looking at the developed countries we saw a decreasing effect over the last decades. These days we realized that fatality rates seem to reach a plateau and further reduction might need additional measures we have to search for. Looking at the developing countries the continuously growing need for mobility, complex traffic scenarios and other factors lead to very high and rising fatality rates.

The situation gets more and more dramatic. India e.g. has the highest number of reported road traffic fatalities in the world, about 147 000 deaths in 2015, which means 11% of all worldwide. This equals with at least 17 people dying on the roads every hour! Without targeted efforts and new initiatives, it is quite probable that the total number of traffic in India will break through the ¼ million mark by 2025. That is why the time has come for the authorities / government agencies, consumer organizations and car manufacturers to take action now - now to act can save many thousands of lives in the future! This was our motivation at Mercedes-Benz to start a unique CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiative to increase the safety awareness in India, called SAFE ROADS.

## IDEA & CONCEPT

The idea behind SAFE ROADS was to increase safety awareness of Indian public addressing aspects in terms of vehicle and road safety and to support a new “safety culture” among the people in India. We believe that the brand name Mercedes-Benz could support this task in an excellent way as safety is one of our core values if not even THE core value based on more than 75 years of safety history.

The concept included the combination of an exhibition besides key presentations from the very beginning. Safety topics should not only be communicated but also demonstrated via exhibits (picture 1). This should give the possibility to address safety and at the same time allow a personal “touch&feel” experience for the audience.

Presentation and exhibits should address all relevant key factors that contribute to the risk of road accident occurrence in India, such as exposure (e.g. increasing vehicle fleet, high number of vulnerable

road users), behavioral factors (e.g. experience of drivers, speeding, use of drugs, enforcement of traffic laws), infrastructure (e.g. road design, markings, signage) and vehicle factors (e.g. crash worthiness, car maintenance checks)



Picture 1.

First concept layout for safety exhibition

## REALIZATION

To realize this concept all internal stakeholders had to be gathered in a joint steering committee. Main driving forces were R&D units in Germany and India. But also our sales organization in India, communication departments in India and Germany, Daimler Financial Services India and Daimler India Commercial Vehicles supported the initiative. External stakeholders, such as JP Research India PVT Ltd, ARAI, NATRIP, IRF and many others were identified. They supported the idea and spirit of SAFE ROADS with key note presentations.

Original planning for 2015 included six large cities, starting with a kickoff in New Delhi. However due to unexpected flooding the Chennai event could not be realized (picture 2).



Picture 2.

Original planning SAFE ROADS tour in 2015

Making use of different communication channels allowed the reach of as many people as possible: In 2015 the launch event in New Delhi was covered by 60 journalists and main stream regional media covered events in each city. More than 13,000 people could experience the different exhibits. Via digital media, e.g. facebook and twitter the initiative reached about 5 million people. Four times 30minutes episodes on NDTV (one of Indias top television news channels) spread key safety messages across the country. Also universities kindly hosted the SAFE ROADS initiative and allowed us to reach especially thousands of young people. For the event in Bengaluru also radio promotion was utilized (picture 3).



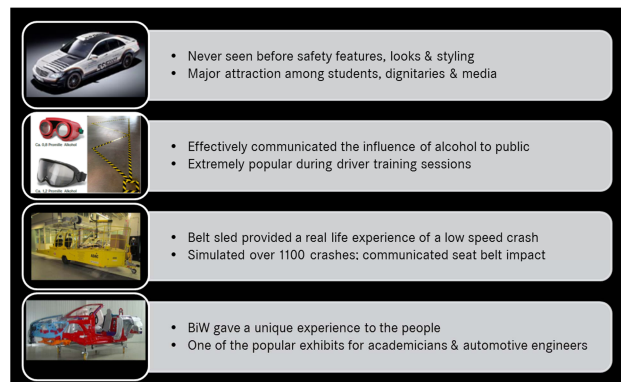
Picture 3. Excellent media echo (TV, Print, Digital)

Especially the body-in-white model drew people's attention. It gave an insight view on the vehicle structure, position of sensors and airbags (picture 4).



Picture 4. Body-in-white model, incl. airbags and sensors

Before continuing SAFE ROADS in the following year we reviewed the events and derived our lessons learned regarding the exhibition (picture 4)



Picture 4. SAFE ROADS lessons learned, exhibits

Beginning of 2016 the SAFE ROADS initiative received an Award from the Indian magazine AUTOCAR for the "BEST CSR CAMPAIGN FOR SAFETY" (picture 5).



Picture 5. SAFE ROADS lessons learned, exhibits

In 2016 the SAFE ROADS initiative targeted three additional large cities (picture 6).



**Picture 6.**  
**SAFE ROADS tour in 2016**

Since we had to ship our belt sled back to Germany end of 2015 (due to customs) we decided to build a new one in India for demonstrating the relevance of



the seat belt – still number one life saver (picture 7).

**Picture 7.**  
**belt sled built in India, "The Convincer"**

More than 40,000 people could experience the exhibits as we also included public places such as large malls besides universities and colleges. Through print media about 14 million people could receive our messages. Again digital media, television and radio were used to promote the initiative.

In 2016 as a highlight visitors could also witness an actual crashed vehicle – a Mercedes-Benz GLC . The passenger compartment of the GLC remained stable in the frontal offset barrier test. The car scored maximum points for its protection of the front passenger dummy, with good protection of all critical body areas. Dummy readings indicated good protection of the knees and femurs of both the driver and passenger. Also, GLC scored maximum

points for its protection of the 1.5 year child dummy in the frontal offset tests. (source: EuroNCAP website). So it was a very good example to showcase exemplary safety (picture 8)



**Picture 8.**  
**SAFE ROADS exhibit – crashed GLC**

On YouTube several videos about SAFE ROADS India can be seen, giving a good impression about the setup and key messages which were transferred.

Finally beginning of 2017 we provided some of the exhibits to the Symposium on International Automotive Technology (SIAT) in Pune (picture 9).



**Picture 9.**  
**SAFE ROADS Exhibits provided for SIAT conference**

## TRANSFORMATION

The great success of SAFE ROADS India led us to the decision to roll out a similar initiative in China. We transformed the concept and added more safety relevant topics. In principal we want to walk the people through our integral safety strategy (picture 10): from the safe driving phase, where the vehicle assists the driver, then preparing itself and the passengers when critical situations occur (e.g. demonstrating PRE-SAFE technologies) and finally showing crash relevant safety and post crash measures.



**Picture 10.**  
**SAFE ROADS concept China**

## CONCLUSIONS - SUSTAINABILITY

The initiative in India should not just vanish after it's success story. We want to keep this candle burning and continuously sending out it's light to the Indian people. So we asked ourselves how to make it sustainable and came up with the idea to establish a new safety conference format in India, trying to integrate SAFE ROADS key elements, e.g. having a "touch&feel" exhibition. We scanned the existing conferences to avoid just doubling up another one. The plan is that the bi-annual conference takes place end of October 2017 in New Delhi for the first time. Main challenges are to find sponsors that are willing to support this concept. We hope that the SAFE ROADS India Summit becomes a strong element within the Indian community for safety technologies.



## Day - 1

Exhibition	<b>Tech Days for Students (10:00 – 16:30)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Note Lecture (Why SAFE ROADS?, Initiative 2015-2016, Scope of this conference)</li> <li>• Government Officials - Accident Statistics Emerging Markets =&gt; India</li> <li>• New Safety Requirements (David Ward, Global NCAP)</li> </ul>
	<b>Safe Roads Awards Ceremony &amp; Summit Networking Dinner (19:00 – 21:30)</b>

## Day - 2

**Welcome Coffee + Registration (08:00 – 09:00)**

Plenary	<b>Session 1 (9:00 – 10:30)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Note Lecture (Why SAFE ROADS?, Initiative 2015-2016, Scope of this conference)</li> <li>• Government Officials - Accident Statistics Emerging Markets =&gt; India</li> <li>• New Safety Requirements (David Ward, Global NCAP)</li> </ul>		
	<b>(10:30 – 12:00)</b> <b>Core Theme 1: Vehicle</b> Simulation of Child Safety Technology	<b>Core Theme 2: Vulnerable Road Users</b> Accident data investigations and results of pedestrians and two wheelers.	<b>Press Conference</b>
<b>Lunch and Expert Talks at the Exhibition (90 min)</b>			
Technical	<b>(13:30 – 15:00)</b> <b>Core Theme 1: Vehicle</b> Testing of Child Safety Technology	<b>Core Theme 2: Vulnerable Road Users</b> Challenges for Emerging Markets	<b>Workshops (2x 45 min.)</b> - Rescue Workshop, - Infrastructure: best practices
Plenary	<b>Session 3 (15:00 – 16:30)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Importance of Safety Education for Children</li> <li>• Panel discussion</li> <li>• Core Theme Summit and Summit Closing</li> </ul>		

**Picture 11.**  
**SAFE ROADS India Summit, end of Oct. 2017 (draft)**