

# The use of CSR funding to support road safety initiatives would go a long way towards enhancing safety on roads.

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Established in 2009, the IRF India Chapter fosters innovation and progress by providing access to and sharing cutting-edge knowledge and expertise. IRF IC's mission is to promote the development of safe roads and safe road networks that enable access and sustainable mobility for all. **Dr. Gangopadhyay, Chairman, IRF IC** speaks about the role played by the firm in the development of safe road networks. Excerpts from the interview...

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## As the new Chairman of IRF India Chapter could you brief us on your immediate thrust areas especially enhancing road safety?

IRF IC's mission is to promote the development of safe roads and safe road networks that enable access and sustainable mobility for all. Its activities are organised around three strategic pillars, namely: Disseminating knowledge, Providing a networking platform and Influencing policy. Towards this end, IRF IC has been undertaking various initiatives so far focusing largely on the safety aspects of roads for all stakeholders.

While continuing to enhance its activities in these areas, we are looking forward to:-

- Awareness generation and promotion of capacity amongst road agencies and corporates with special focus on safety aspect.
- Projects and association with international agencies to bring innovative technologies in road safety.
- Along with our activities on other 4E's of road safety, we hope to focus in a major way on promoting capacity in Emergency Care through Enhanced First Aid (eFD), training of bystanders, which is anticipated to have a major effect on bringing down road accident related deaths.
- Identification studies of blackspots and rectification measures: Training of road safety professionals in road safety audits for retro correction of blackspots and aspects not conforming to desired road safety parameters.
- Generating and encouraging research in the context of mix mode traffic prevalent in India for identification of best solutions.

## What do you think the major challenges in this space since a variety of stakeholders are involved to achieve the desired goals and many times the interface is weak?

There are many agencies and stakeholders all trying to achieve the desired goals and coordination between these agencies is not only desirable but necessary. No single agency can do enough, but it is important that the efforts are distributed without overlapping and repetition. It is also important that efforts are not too thinly spread to achieve desired impact. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is the nodal agency

IRF-IC Conference on Trauma Care – A National Mission.



for road safety matters in the country. The need is to finalise a national programme for improving road safety scenario in the country. This would need coordination between all wings of the government, each one of which have to work in tandem to get the desired results. As regards the private participation, there should be synergy amongst the various players as each one of them can contribute immensely to the cause. There should be no apprehension in anyone's mind that they need to be principal actors in this area. It is a common cause and everyone must work shoulder to shoulder to achieve the objective.

### How do you assess the initiatives taken by the government so far and what policy / regulatory reforms do you expect?

An excellent initiative had emerged in the form of 'Good Samaritan Guidelines' which has been enacted as a Law in the State of Karnataka. Other states need to take similar initiative post haste. This is necessary because, road safety is a concurrent subject. This will enable people to assist the accident victim without fear of harassment by the Police and other enforcement agencies, besides getting the accident victims immediate medical attention as soon as a patient is taken there without waiting for any payments, lodging of police complaints, etc.

### What is the role of disruptive technologies and digital platforms in enhancing road safety?

Such technologies will ultimately connect people, processes and data in wide scale networks. The economic impact of the new technologies will occur through various mechanism affecting the demand and supply side of the economy through

- Reducing the need for travel through substitution
- Improving the efficiency of travel by creating new modes, improved route planning, etc
- Improving the efficiency of infrastructure construction, operation and management, etc.

Each of these changes will invariably also affect the design and construction of roads and create new demands on road safety. This is amply demonstrated by the conduct of business world over during Covid times. The technology has been a great enabler as far as communication is concerned. Besides the tech savvy sectors, even traditional business have beautifully adapted to the demand of the times.

### Could you throw some light on the major initiatives IRF-IC has already brought in, especially bringing in Cooperative, Connected & Automated Mobility (CCA)?

IRF had organized four Roundtables on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). The

Roundtables had the participation of government institutions at the highest level and prominent private stakeholders. The main objective of these high level round tables was to develop a comprehensive action plan for ensuring speedy deployment and optimisation of ITS in India to address the problems of road safety, congestion, pollution and mobility in India in the most cost efficient and sustainable manner.

As a follow up of this effort, the IRF joined hands with the NITI Aayog to formulate ITS Policy for India. IRF IC chaired the Technical sub-Committee for this purpose set up by NITI Aayog. The report of the Committee has been submitted.

### What are the steps initiated to bring in private players major role in enhancing road safety?

The role of private players in road safety is exceedingly important to complement and fast track government's efforts to improve the road safety scenario. For instance, IRF IC has been instrumental in MoRTH issuing Circulars for Engineering Measures required to construct and promote forgiving roads instead of just constructing roads.


IRF IC has been working towards various tax exemptions for investment in road safety and has also got clarified the more recent provisions of CSR to include road safety.

It has also informed its members that road safety activities are 100% income tax exempt under Section 35 of the Income Tax Act 1961. Corporates can therefore invest in road safety under these provisions as well as section 80G.

All profit earning corporates have to make mandatory spends of 2% on CSR funding. The use of CSR funding to support road safety initiatives would go a long way towards enhancing safety on roads.

### Please brief us on IFR-IC's road map to facilitate faster and safer and sustainable road construction processes and methodologies?

As you know, I have recently taken over IRF IC Chairmanship, but I have plans for facilitating various safer and faster processes through deliberations, consultation with and engaging our members in promoting technology driven design for safety which is environmentally friendly as also sustainable. Among other things, IRF IC has adapted to Indian conditions IRF - CHANGER software, a greenhouse gas calculator for reducing the GHG emissions from the raw materials used in road construction projects, which it hopes to widely promote.

We would also promote the use of new construction materials and methodologies. 

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