

A Preventable Epidemic

Child road traffic fatalities in Zambia and the case for a Safe System approach

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ZRST road safety education and school-zone evidence

Start with the child



“The journey to school should not be the most dangerous part of a child’s day.”

- A child carries books, not a risk map
- The road decides who reaches class
- Repeated loss is system failure

Child road safety emergency

The 2025 child toll should be treated as a child survival warning.

243

children under 16 killed
in 2025

≈5/week

children killed every
week

28.8%

external-cause deaths,
ages 5–14

Blind spot: road injury is still treated as a transport issue, while the dead child is also an education, health and family loss.

Official data points to pedestrians



48.6%

of 2021 road fatalities were pedestrians

- Children are exposed at crossings
- School gates sit on live roads
- Walking children carry the burden

Why children die



The child is small. The system is unforgiving.

- High speeds near school gates
- No safe walking space
- No forgiving crossing design

Safe System test: would this road forgive a child's mistake?

School journey risk



This is where health, education and transport policy meet.

- Roadside walking
- Informal loading and drop-off
- Weak school-location crash data

A school gate can be a risk point or a protection point.

Safe System for children

A Safe System accepts human error but refuses fatal outcomes.

- Safe speeds
- Safe roads and roadsides
- Safe road users
- Safe vehicles
- Post-crash care
- Safe school routes



ZRST field engagement around school-zone speed management

30 km/h school zones



+1%

mean speed

+4%

fatal crash risk

Pedestrian death risk rises sharply as impact speed rises.

- Law needs visible rollout
- Signs need traffic calming
- Traffic calming needs enforcement

Local proof from Zambia



105

primary schools
in Lusaka pilot

1★→5★

iRAP school access
rating

150,000+

learners served

This is not theory. ZRST and partners have built and measured safer school environments in Zambia.

Source: ZRST AfroSAFE abstract, 2026; UNDP/ZRST Safe School Zone pilot evidence; iRAP methodology.

Justin Kabwe: before and after

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: children walking in live traffic space
- Change: crossing, signs and speed treatment
- Why it matters: mistakes become survivable

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

Hillside Primary School

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: school frontage lacked strong cues
- Change: school-zone warning made visible
- Why it matters: drivers read the road earlier

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

Mambilima Primary School

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: weak school-zone definition
- Change: clearer frontage and road cues
- Why it matters: safer daily school access

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

Mkandawire Primary School

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: roadside walking without enough control
- Change: school-zone treatment and warning
- Why it matters: protection before the gate

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

Raised crossing and protected edge

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: pedestrians mixed with moving traffic
- Change: raised crossing and bollards
- Why it matters: slower vehicles, clearer priority

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

Defined school frontage

BEFORE



AFTER



- Risk: bare school frontage
- Change: marked crossing and warning sign
- Why it matters: children become visible road users

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone project photographs from attached Daniel Mwamba AfroSAFE/ZRST presentation.

What changed on the ground



A safe school zone is a package, not a signboard.

- Protected walking space
- Defined crossings
- Speed management
- Driver warning cues

Weak claim to avoid: “affordable everywhere” without site costs.

Photo evidence: real ZRST school-zone intervention photographs. Cost and BoQ evidence needed before making affordability claims.

Zambia's building blocks



- RTSA mandate and coordination role
- 30 km/h school-zone principle
- ZRST/UNDP pilot evidence
- City walking and cycling momentum

The gap is not total absence. The gap is integration, finance and delivery discipline.

What is still missing



Strategy

No dedicated national child road safety strategy

Enforcement

Limited routine speed control around schools

Finance

No protected line for safe school routes

Data

Weak link between crashes and school proximity

ZRST Urgent request



By 2030, Zambia should halve child road deaths and serious injuries.

1

Adopt

**National child road
safety strategy**

2

Fund

**Safe school zones
and walking routes**

3

Enforce

**30 km/h school
zones with speed
data**

4

Publish

**Annual child
casualty
dashboard**

Make every high-risk school gate a 30 km/h Safe School Zone.

No child should die for school



“We cannot call a child’s death preventable and then fail to fund the prevention.”

**Thank you.
Daniel Mwamba
Zambia Road Safety Trust**