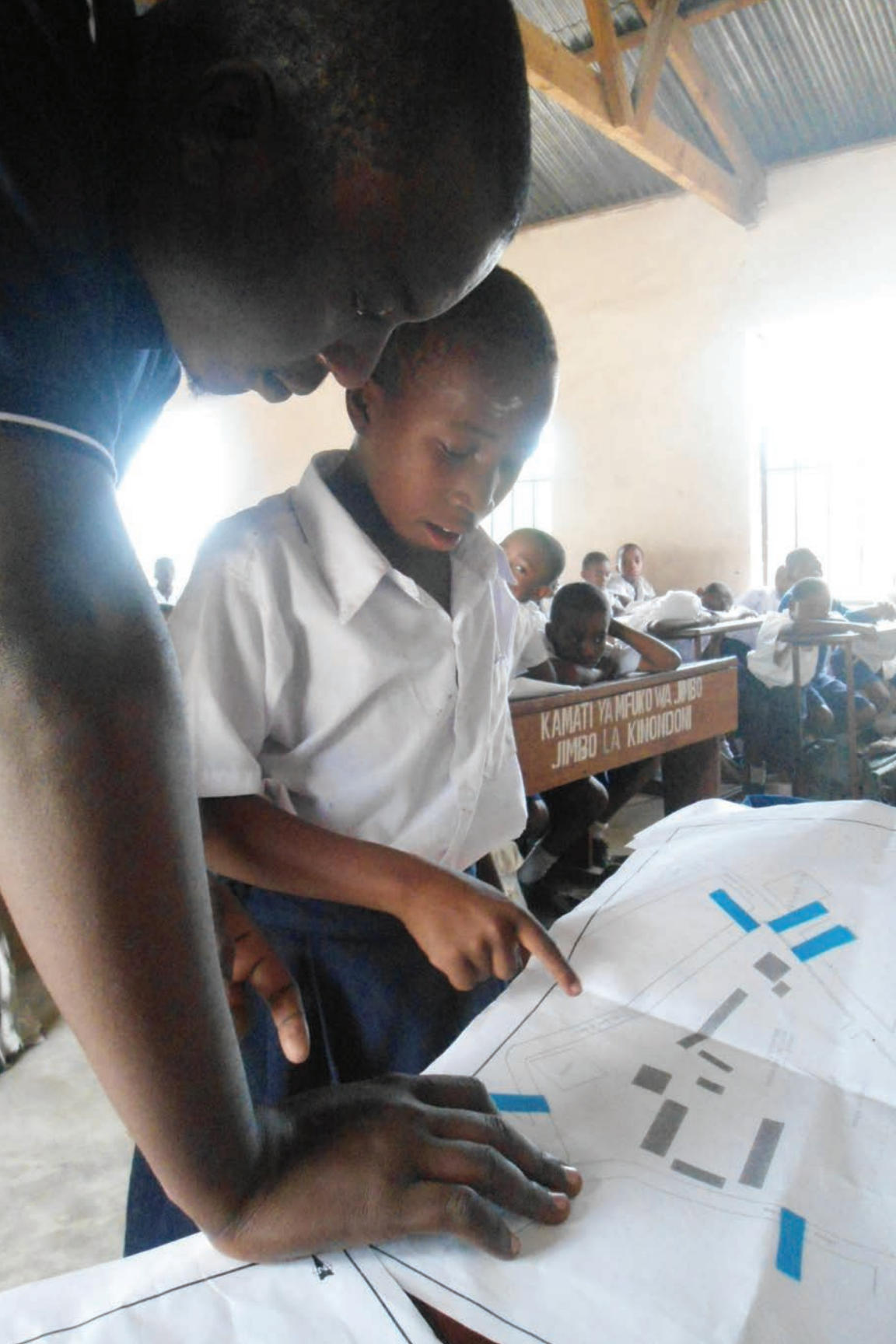




VISION ZERO CITIES



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Navigating Responsibility for Intervention in Africa

In African cities, unsafe streets and epidemic levels of pedestrian fatalities are a threat to human rights. Amend Program Manager Ayikai Poswayo argues that low-cost NGO-implemented solutions have proven to remedy the problem, but finding government support for the implementation of safe streets is more complicated.



Michael Obeng, age 11, walked to school every day in Accra, Ghana, a capital city of more than 2 million people, until he was knocked down by a mini bus while crossing the busy road between his school and home. His injuries were so severe that he missed almost an entire year of education.

As African cities begin to consider Vision Zero, stories like Michael Obeng's become emblematic of the continent's unique Vision Zero challenge, with poverty and traffic safety so inextricably intertwined. Despite the world's lowest motorization rate, Africa has the most dangerous roads, and more pedestrians die there than on any other continent. Road traffic injury is the leading cause of death of people aged 15 to 29 years old. In a study of four major African cities, 87% of the students surveyed walked to school. Michael survived, but many do not.

Traffic Controls Access

When accessing basic human rights like water and education requires crossing truly dangerous roads, it's a deadly quid pro quo. The economics, education, and basic resources that have the potential to contribute in lifting the continent's future are often barricaded from individuals like Michael by unsafe city streets. However, there is hope in new and developing ideas that can uniquely lift low- and middle-income countries with limited resources. Even in countries with the fewest resources, traffic safety programs are not rocket science. Simple, inexpensive and proven-effective design solutions exist. We are beginning to see the effectiveness of implementing these low-cost interventions, as well as some undeniable indicators as to why hundreds of thousands of people suffer from traffic crashes despite known solutions.

Over the past few years, various global goals for road safety have been set, from the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) to the Habitat III Quito Declaration. But how does the world make

sure that the lofty goals set in conference rooms actually translate into action at the grassroots, in communities such as Michael's, especially as very limited resources have been made available to address this public health crisis?

Low-Cost Interventions

At Amend, a non-governmental organization (NGO) focused on road safety in Africa, we are attempting to translate these goals into action. Amend's School Area Road Safety Assessments and Improvement (SARSAI) conducts systematic assessments of school areas where children are known to be at extremely high risk of road traffic injury. Most of these school areas have 1% to 2% of their student population injured in traffic every year. For example, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2015, Amend carried out assessments at nine schools at high risk of road traffic injury. This involved mapping out pupil catchment areas; observing pupils on their journeys to school; undertaking various pedestrian counts, traffic counts and speed surveys; and last, but most certainly not least, speaking to the children themselves as well as their teachers and parents to get a better understanding of the risk. At one of these schools in Dar es Salaam, bollards were installed outside the school



ABOUT

Ayikai Poswayo is a program manager at Amend, a non-governmental organization that focuses on road safety in Africa. Ayikai has a passion for children and safety. Her current role involves overseeing the implementation of Amend's 'safe routes to school' program across a number of countries on the continent. Prior to joining Amend, Ayikai worked as a traffic engineer for consultancies in the United Kingdom and Ghana. She worked on a variety of projects, including pedestrian, cyclist, and bus priority schemes.

wall to prevent vehicles from parking at this location. A zebra crossing flanked by speed humps was also installed. Before installation of the bollards and speed humps, children would be forced to walk along the edge of the road in close proximity to fast-moving vehicles, as the parked vehicles had taken up the walking area adjacent to the school wall. Amend conducted an assessment at a school in the Kwashieman neighborhood of Accra, after finding that a number of children had been knocked down right outside their school gate. The installation of speed humps and a zebra crossing, and the construction of a footpath, facilitated children being able to cross the road in front of their school safely.

At one school, also in Dar es Salaam, where vehicles had been found to travel at high speeds, a series of four speed humps and two zebra crossings with accompanying signage were installed to facilitate children

being able to cross a road in front of their school. After the intervention, average vehicle speeds in front of the school gate dropped from 41 kph (26 mph) before the speed humps to 17 kph (11 mph) after.

The Responsibility for Safe Infrastructure

For the advocates at Amend, this process of interviews, surveys and intervention is regular practice. A tailored road safety education program is provided for all children at SARSAI schools.

We come up with proposals for improved safety around high-risk schools and collaborate with the relevant government agencies to implement them.

In a population-based control evaluation of SARSAI interventions in Dar es Salaam, a study conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it was found that injury rates were



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reduced over 25% for the 2,015 schools that received interventions. A notable reduction in the severity of injuries that did occur was documented as well.

A few facts are clear: in some cities in Africa, dangerous roads are directly preventing children's education; the SARSAI program is a model that contributes to the reduction of injuries at some high-risk schools; safety at schools surrounded by dangerous local roads can be improved with simple action; and it only requires inexpensive intervention to create a positive impact. But ultimately, what is most clear is that it is not the role or responsibility of NGOs like Amend to provide safe infrastructure for a country's children – that is the job of governments.

At Amend, we set out to make small differences that have the potential to be scaled up by governments for a larger impact. We have proven that children do not have to be injured and killed on their way to school. We have proven that these interventions can

be low-cost and effective. Unfortunately, rapid urbanization and development, along with capacity and resource issues, make it difficult for many governments to keep up with the road safety needs of their children. Accordingly, Amend is currently implementing its SARSAI program in 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of saving lives now at schools where children are at exceptionally high risk of road traffic injury, while demonstrating to governments – via the implementations and advocacy – that they can – and indeed must – act to prevent road traffic injuries to their children.

SOURCES

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