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# The Silent Epidemic Affecting Us All

Road crashes have become one of the world's most devastating epidemics killing about 1.35 billion people worldwide every year and injuring many more victims every day. This silent killer is among the biggest killers of young people aged between 5 and 29 according to statistic present by the World Health Organization.

Road crashes claim most lives in low to middle income countries and the SADC region accounts for the highest number of deaths per 100,000 people. These disturbing statistics are so relevant here in Zimbabwe where at least 10 pedestrians were hit by motorised vehicles every day in the first quarter of 2021.

In addition to the human toll, road crashes are estimated to cost national economies between 3-5% of GDP per year, in Zimbabwe's case that amounts to about all the total annual earnings of Tourism industry in 2018, (before the Covid-19 Pandemic), which has been recorded as one of the best years for Zimbabwe tourism growth in recent years. This alone is cause for imminent action for road safety priority in Zimbabwe.

Road Safe Zimbabwe Trust is an apolitical, voluntary NGO that is legally registered in Zimbabwe and has been active in the advocacy and education for safer road use in Zimbabwe for over 10 years to date. Over the years, our activities have spanned from participation in awareness campaigns, nation road safety consultation input, establishing a pilot safe road crossing at Sunningdale Primary School, and post-crash trauma counselling.

The socioeconomic burden on society caused by road crash injuries, disabilities and deaths, is one that we cannot continue to ignore. And the most painful part about this carnage is that it is both unnecessary and avoidable in most cases.

Road crashes significantly contribute to the further impoverishment of the ordinary Zimbabweans. These have ripple effects especially where breadwinners are permanently injured or killed.

Road user behaviour, lack of proper enforcement of road rules and regulations, lack adequate road infrastructure, and a crumbling health system in Zimbabwe all contribute to the unmanageable road carnage in our country. Raising awareness against a lot of risky behaviour especially by road users will go a long way in reducing the occurrence of road crashes and in line with the SDG targets of halving road deaths to 50% by 2030.

Currently, we are in the 2nd United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety, this is an opportunity to put all hands on deck for safer road use, and thereby reap the unending benefits of road crash prevention.

Currently, some of the organisations activities include the establishment of safe pedestrian crossing zones at schools, starting with those that are located close to busy roads. This an effort to make the daily commute to and from school safer for children, who are without a doubt among the most vulnerable road users.





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Other programs include educational workshops and seminars for road safety best practice in Zimbabwe, post-crash response interventions through partnerships with EMT's and continued advocacy to policy makers on the urgent need for investing in road crash prevention.

Recently, Road Safe Zimbabwe Trust and other road safety stakeholders in Zimbabwe joined the rest of the world in commemorating the 6th United Nations Global Road Safety Week which was held 17-23 May 2021. The week highlighted on the benefits of low-speed urban streets as the heart of any community. Calls were made to policy-makers to act for low-speed streets in cities worldwide, limiting speeds to 30 km/h (20 mph) where people live, work and play.

Low-speed streets make for cities that are not only safe, but also healthy, green and liveable. The objectives of the Week were to garner policy commitments at national and local levels to deliver 30 km/h speed limits and zones in

urban areas; generate local support for such low-speed measures; and build momentum towards the launch of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 in late 2021 and the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2022.

As we look ahead, Road Safe Zimbabwe Trust has started preparations for 2 very important events in road safety calendar, being the Global Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims and Africa Road Safety Day which both fall on the 3rd Sunday of November every year.

Our sights as an organisation are on continued activism to ensure sustainable advocacy for the reduction of road carnage in Zimbabwe and in the SADC region. Road Safe Zimbabwe Trust is a member of world organisations such as The Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety, the International Road Victims Partnership and the also a founding member of The SADC Alliance for Road Safety NGO's.