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## Community engagement and behavior change

*Role of parents, schools and local communities in protecting children on Benin's roads*



MINISTÈRE DU CADRE DE VIE  
ET DES TRANSPORTS  
EN CHARGE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE  
RÉPUBLIQUE DU BÉNIN



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### AARSLA Webinar

Association of Leading Road Safety Agencies in Africa

**Friday, April 17, 2026**

# Outline of the presentation



## Diagnosis

Child road accident rates in Benin (2015-2024)



## Determinants of resistance

Why Dangerous Behaviors Persist



## Role of parents

First educator, first planner



## Role of schools

Discipline, Education, and Innovation



## Role of communities

Structural framework, civil society and economic operators



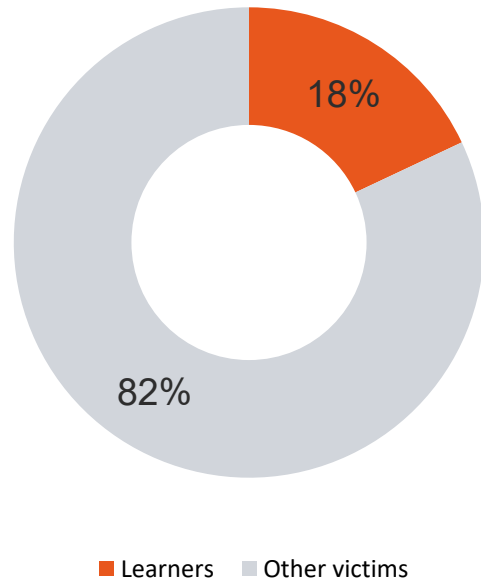
## Wrap up

A model of shared action for Africa

# Learners: an over-represented vulnerable group

Official data collected between 2015 and 2024 in Benin

Proportion of learners among overall victims



**18%**

of total accident victims  
are learners

**67%**

of learning victims  
are boys

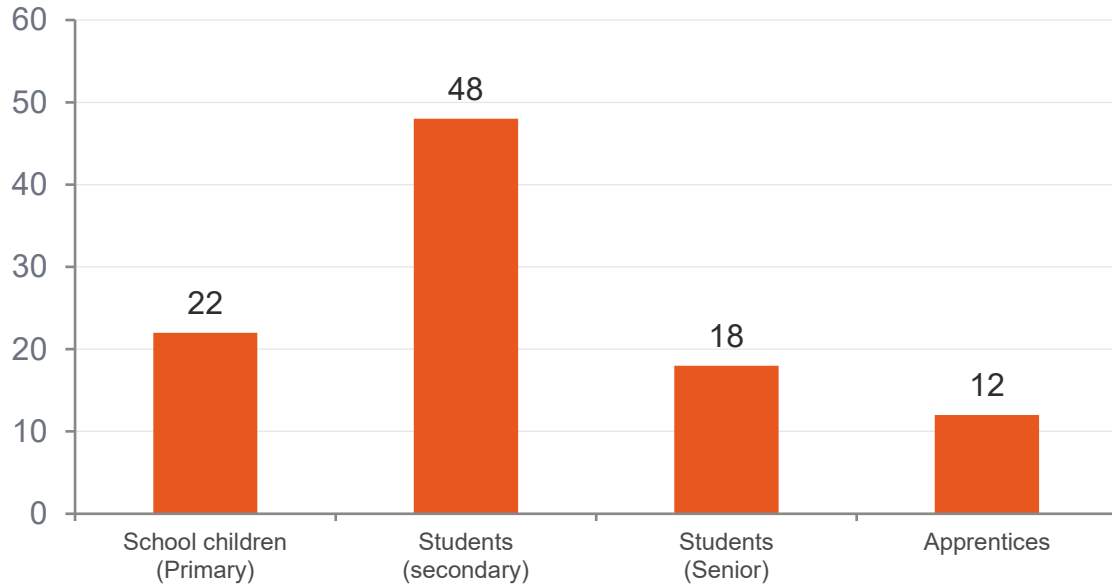
**78%**

were driving without helmets  
at the time of the accident

Each learner who is a victim represents an interrupted school life, a bruised family and a human potential lost for Benin.

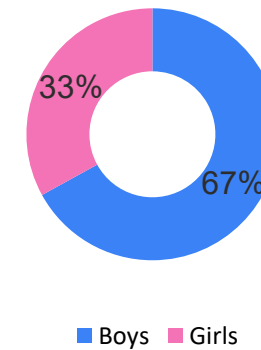
## Profile of the affected learners: school status, gender and working hours

Distribution by educational status



**Secondary school students** account for the majority of accidents: more autonomous mobility, frequent use of motorcycle taxis without protection, rush hour trips.

Gender distribution



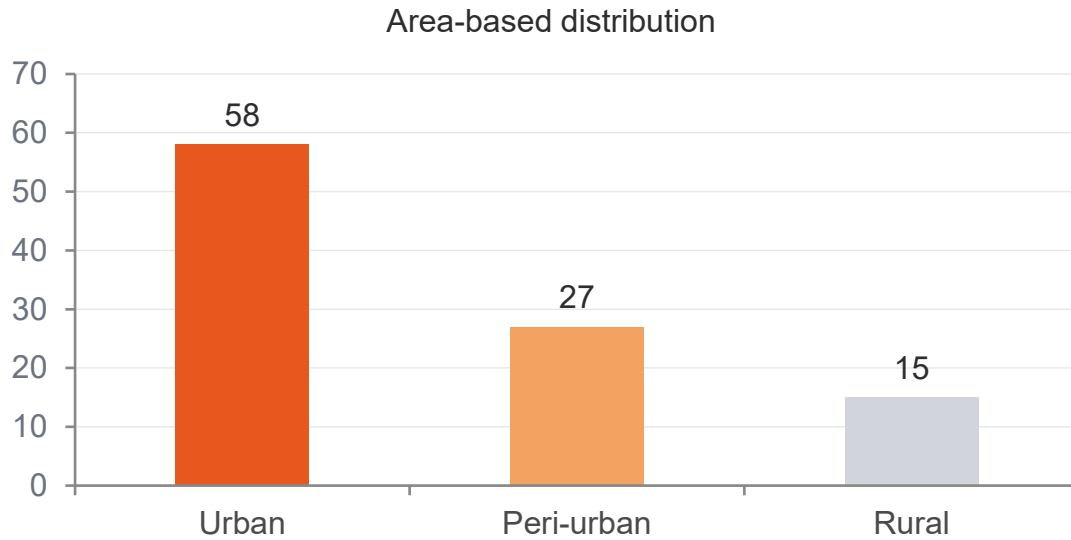
### High-risk schedules

**6 a.m. - 8 a.m.:** morning slot (outward journey)

**4 p.m. - 6 p.m.:** most accident-prone time slot (return trip)

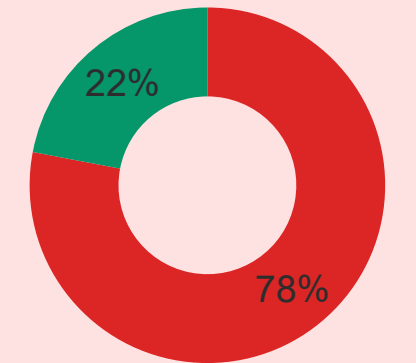
**19%** of accidents are at night: insufficient public lighting in the vicinity of establishments

## Risk areas and aggravating factor: not wearing helmets



The majority of accidents occur in urban areas on roads with high traffic density. Growing peri-urban areas are at increased risk in the absence of safe development.

**Growth in deaths:** Donga +29% | Couffo +28% | Plateau +28% | Hills +17%



Without a helmet With helmet

**78% of learners involved in accidents were travelling without helmets. It is the main aggravating factor in serious injuries and deaths among school motorcyclists.**

# Why do dangerous behaviors persist?

*Understanding the barriers is a prerequisite for effective intervention*



## Risk Normalization

The daily journey on a motorcycle without a helmet trivializes the danger in the eyes of the child and those around them. Perceived risk fades behind routine.



## Economic pressure

The use of zemidjans is often the only available choice. Safety comes second to the urgency of everyday life and the constraints of time and money.



## Negative parenting role models

The child imitates. Crossing off pedestrian crossings, making a phone call while driving, driving without a seatbelt: these gestures normalize transgression.



## Structural Educational Void

Absence of formal road safety education in school curricula and limited scope of ad hoc campaigns without community roots.

**The family educational void + the absence of school curricula = a double structural deficit to be filled**

# The parent: first road safety educator

*The parent is both the primary behavioral model and the main organizer of the child's movements*



## Example Pedagogy

- Respecting the rules in the presence of children
- Wear a helmet, do not make a phone call while driving
- The child builds his habits by observation



## Safe routes and pedestrian buses

- Plan safe routes (not the shortest ones)
- Organize collective pedestrian collection systems
- Parent volunteers on fixed itineraries and schedules



## Progressive empowerment

- Physically accompany the youngest
- Gradually prepare the child to move around alone
- Aiming for security over speed



## Involvement of PTAs

- Lever to obtain secure approaches
- Interface between families, schools and authorities
- Demanding concrete accommodations

## Findings: Risky parenting behaviours

### Observed behaviors

- Recruitment of Zimidjans for the headhelmet-free school journey: normalization of risk
- Road safety rarely discussed in families, or dealt with by injunctions rather than education
- Crossing outside pedestrian crossings with the child
- Seatbelt-free driving
- Telephone use while driving in the presence of the child



### Impact on the child

- Distorted perception of road risk
- Propensity to break rules
- Educational void within the family
- Reproduction of dangerous behaviors in adulthood

# Schools: a central player in road safety

*The school is responsible for the surroundings, the behaviours it teaches and the links with the community*

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01

## **Discipline in the vicinity**

Regulate anarchic parking, motorcycles on sidewalks and double-file depots, in collaboration with the police

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02

## **School police barriers**

Effective and immediately enforceable measure to reduce speed when approaching schools during rush hour

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03

## **Weekly messages**

Incorporate SR instructions into the flag-raising ceremonies (CNSR experience: Atacora-Alibori, Donga)

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04

## **School Travel Plan**

Official document: town hall (works), school (education), parents (supervision). Interface between families and authorities

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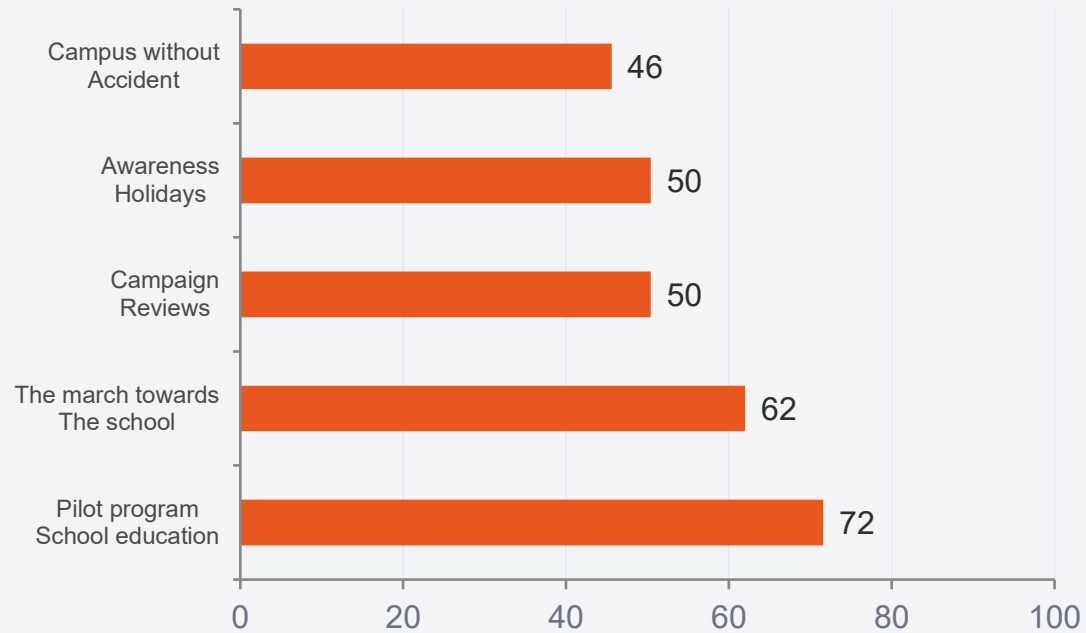
05

## **Road Safety Clubs**

Student ambassadors, thematic days, practical exercises: simulation of crossings, reading of signs, role-playing

## School-based road education: the results

Impact score for school education activities (PTA 2026)



*The school pilot program (score 71.6) is the most promising activity in the CNSR portfolio*

### Anticipatory actions that can be implemented now

- Live Safe Crossing Simulations
- Traffic Sign Recognition and Reading
- Driver/pedestrian role play in classroom or playground
- Partnerships with CNSR for pedagogical interventions
- Establishment of road safety clubs in schools

## Pioneering legislative progress in Benin



### Benin's Future Road Code

The draft Highway Code currently being adopted in Benin explicitly enshrines road education in schools and for learning. This is a first in West Africa, creating an institutional obligation for the education system and paving the way for the development of formal road education curricula integrated into national curricula.

### While waiting for the final adoption, schools can already act

#### Institutional Obligation

The education system will need to integrate road safety into its programs

#### Formal curricula

Standardized R&E modules integrated into national curricula

#### Immediate Actions

Simulations, panels, role-plays, CNSR partnerships, RS clubs in schools

# The Community's structural framework

*Without this framework, parents and schools are not doing enough*



## Local Governments

- 30 zones and school streets closed during peak hours
- Safe facilities (sidewalks, pedestrian crossings)
- Inclusion of road safety in local development plans



## Law enforcement

- School crossing guards at dangerous crossroads
- Active regulation in the vicinity of schools
- Cooperation between schools and police during transit times



## Civil Society

- NGOs, women's groups, religious and customary leaders
- Campaigns in local languages, markets, places of worship
- Irreplaceable convening capacity



## Economic operators

- Zemidjan trade unions: key partners
- Riverside traders sensitized
- Example LNB: financing of crossing guides



**Association Alinagnon:** concrete example of the potential of Beninese civil society. It rehabilitates degraded infrastructure around schools, demonstrating that targeted community engagement produces concrete results.

# The Integrated Community Approach

Child Road Safety Cannot Be Achieved by One Actor



# Key messages for Africa

1

18 percent of road accident victims in Benin are learners. 78% were driving without helmets. Secondary school students are the most affected. This requires a concerted and structured response.

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2

The parent is the first road safety educator. His behavior conditions the perception of risk in the child. The child builds his habits by observation.

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3

The school can become a hub for road safety: weekly messages, practical exercises, RH clubs. The pilot program in Benin (score 71.6/100) shows the way.

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4

Benin's draft Road Safety Code is a pioneering step forward in West Africa by enshrining school road education as an institutional obligation.

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5

The community approach (NGOs, religious leaders, women's groups, local languages) is more persuasive than the purely institutional approach.

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6

One-off campaigns are not enough. Only road education that is embedded in the daily lives of families, schools and communities will produce lasting behavioural change.



**Thank you for your attention**

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National Road Safety Center

*Republic of Benin*

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