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Review

Is safety for non-motorized transport users truly a policy priority in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Joel Kironde , Chris Bic Byaruhanga, Paul Isolo Mukwaya, Meleckidzedek Khayesi, Byakagaba Patrick, Walid Abdullah Al Bargi, ...show all

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Abstract

Non-motorized transport (NMT), particularly walking and cycling, constitutes a significant share of daily mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), yet pedestrians and cyclists remain disproportionately affected by road traffic fatalities and injuries. This review examines whether NMT safety is substantively prioritized within transport policy regimes in SSA. It investigates how safety is framed in policy discourse, the extent to which commitments are institutionally and financially embedded, and whether implementation reflects genuine prioritization or symbolic inclusion. A systematic literature review guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach analyzed peer-reviewed studies, policy documents, and institutional reports published between 2000 and 2026. Findings indicate that while policy frameworks increasingly acknowledge vulnerable road users, implementation remains constrained by motorization-oriented planning, limited funding, and fragmented institutional responsibilities. NMT infrastructure is often treated as a secondary component of road projects, with funding frequently dependent on external support. Consequently, a persistent gap exists between policy rhetoric and safety outcomes, with continued high pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and injuries. The review concludes that NMT safety in SSA is not fully embedded in regulatory, institutional, and fiscal systems, highlighting the need for stronger coordination, inclusive design standards, and sustained funding.

Keywords:

Non-motorized transport road safety transport policy Sub-Saharan Africa

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