BOX 13
Amend works to keep Africa’s school children safe

Child pedestrians are among the most vulnerable road users in sub-Saharan Africa. This is because, compared to their school-going peers in other regions, they are more likely to walk to school, and do so over long distances on roads that put them in dangerous proximity to traffic (63). Relatively inexpensive, strategically placed infrastructure measures can make pedestrians safer on roads.

Amend, a nongovernmental organization in sub-Saharan Africa, has developed the School Area Road Safety Assessments and Improvement (SARSAI) programme. The SARSAI programme focuses on reducing injuries around primary schools in urban African cities, where children are known to be at exceptionally high risk of a road traffic injury. Typically, these are schools where more than 2% of students are injured in road traffic crashes in any given year (63,64).

SARSAI systematically assesses areas around schools and identifies and implements measures to improve road safety, including:
- small-scale infrastructure improvements, such as
  - road humps (to reduce vehicle speeds at crucial points)
  - bollards (to separate walkways from vehicles)
  - improved sidewalk areas (so children do not need to walk on the roads)
  - the relocation of school gates (so that children do not exit directly onto busy roads)
  - zebra crossings (to provide demarcated places for children to cross roads);
- signage to alert drivers to the presence of schools;
- road safety education for children and communities about the new infrastructure and its purpose.

At five primary schools where Amend implemented SARSAI in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania there was one death and eight injuries in road traffic among the student population in the 12 months preceding the implementation of SARSAI and just one injury in the 12 months following implementation. Amend is currently conducting a multi-year, population-based control impact evaluation of SARSAI in partnership with the US Centers for Disease Control, gathering data at 18 school areas in the country.

Once infrastructural improvements around a school have been made as part of the programme, ongoing upkeep is transferred to local government authorities in charge of the roads: the evaluation data collected over the implementation period will be important in advocating for the sustainability of the project.