



ATHENA

# PERSPECTIVES

VOL. 3, ISSUE 4 • 27 JANUARY - 2 FEBRUARY 2026

## TRANSPORTATION



# Protecting the Vulnerable

## Why Nigeria Must Reform Laws for Pedestrians and Cyclists

Chinaza Igwe and Cynthia Obodo

### Issues in the News

- Sixteen Officers Face Court Martial Over Coup Plot
- Kano Governor Yusuf Defects to APC
- External Reserves Hits N46bn
- Over 160 Worshippers Abducted in Kaduna

### Regional Update

- Niger Aligns Auxiliary Staff Retirement Age With Civil Servants at 62
- Chad Regulates Police Custody
- Benin's Main Opposition Party Absent in National Assembly
- Cameroon Teacher Killed After Ransom Kidnapping

---

Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership operates as an independent, non-partisan think tank in compliance with Nigerian laws and regulations, committed to promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability.

Our mission is to conduct rigorous research and provide evidence-based recommendations that contribute to the development of a prosperous and forward-looking society in Nigeria.

© Athena Perspectives, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 27 January - 2 February 2026

**Cover Image:** ITDP Africa

# Executive Summary

---

Non-motorised transport (NMT)—walking and cycling—remains essential for millions of Nigerians, particularly low-income households, yet is systematically neglected in law, planning, and investment. Rapid urbanisation and motorisation have prioritised vehicles, exposing pedestrians and cyclists, who account for roughly one-third of road deaths, to disproportionate risk. By mid-2025, more than 3,800 pedestrian casualties were recorded, over half involving children or the elderly. Road crashes and congestion also impose an economic burden equivalent to approximately 5% of GDP annually.

Despite national commitments to road safety, climate resilience, and public health, NMT lacks enforceable legal standards, dedicated funding, institutional coordination, and reliable data. Weak enforcement and insufficient infrastructure—scarce pavements, cycle lanes, and safe crossings—force pedestrians and cyclists into direct conflict with motor traffic.

Evidence from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Bogotá demonstrates that statutory mandates, safe design standards, speed management, incentives, and behaviour-change initiatives can normalise active mobility and reduce fatalities.

To achieve safe, equitable, and sustainable urban mobility, Nigeria must urgently enact legal protections for pedestrians and cyclists, invest in continuous pavements and cycle lanes, enforce traffic regulations, integrate public awareness campaigns, and strengthen institutional capacity. Coordinated, evidence-based reforms will save lives, reduce congestion, lower emissions, and secure inclusive mobility for all citizens.

## How Nigeria's Transport System Fails Pedestrians and Cyclists

Walking and cycling have long been central to everyday mobility in Nigeria, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities. Historically, a large share of the population depended on non-motorised transport (NMT) for access to work, education, and basic services. However, rapid urbanisation and accelerating motorisation have steadily displaced this tradition. In Lagos alone, a population exceeding 20 million, growing at an estimated 6 per cent annually, has driven transport policy decisively towards private motor vehicles, while legal and planning frameworks for NMT have been persistently overlooked.

Although isolated political gestures have occurred—most notably the promotion of cycling by the Minister of Transport, Ojo Maduekwe, during the 2001 fuel crisis—these efforts were not sustained. Meaningful policy recognition of walking and cycling emerged only between 2018 and 2024, largely at the sub-national level. This neglect has deep historical roots. Colonial and early post-colonial road planning prioritised vehicular movement, largely excluding pedestrians and cyclists from design considerations. As a result, pavements, safe crossings, and cycle lanes remain scarce, and road space continues to favour fast-moving vehicles.

The consequences are severe. Pedestrians and cyclists are among the most vulnerable road users in Nigeria. Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) data indicate that approximately [32 per cent of road traffic fatalities involve pedestrians and cyclists](#). By mid-2025, more than 3,800 pedestrian casualties had been recorded, with 56 per cent involving children or the elderly. [Nigeria records an average of 5,000 road deaths annually, equivalent to 21.4 deaths per 100,000 population](#)—well above global averages.

Beyond the human toll, social and economic costs are substantial. Walking and cycling are widely perceived as unsafe or as modes of last resort, reinforcing social exclusion and limiting independent mobility, particularly for children, women, and older persons. Chronic congestion wastes fuel and time, while [road traffic crashes account for an estimated annual loss of up to 5 per cent of national GDP](#). Weak data systems, poor compliance with traffic rules, and inconsistent enforcement further amplify these risks.

### The Problem



#### ROAD USER RISK

**32%**  
of fatalities are  
pedestrians & cyclists



#### ECONOMIC LOSS

Road crashes &  
congestion cost  
**5%** of GDP  
annually



#### INFRASTRUCTURE GAP

- Few pavements or cycle lanes
- Roads built for speed, not people
- Weak enforcement; limited capacity

**34k Engineers**  
**2,333 Planners**  
**18k FRSC staff**



#### SOCIAL BARRIERS

- Walking and cycling seen as unsafe or low-status
- Mobility restricted for children, women, elderly

---

Despite the existence of traffic laws prohibiting sidewalk parking, illegal stopping, and failure to yield to pedestrians, the physical environment often makes compliance impossible. Many major roads lack pavements, footpaths, or safe pedestrian crossings, forcing pedestrians and cyclists into direct conflict with motor traffic. [Between January and June 2024, the FRSC recorded over 323,000 traffic arrests nationwide](#), reflecting enforcement activity but also persistently low compliance, particularly with rules intended to protect non-motorised road users.

Institutional capacity remains constrained. The FRSC operates nationwide with approximately [18,000 personnel](#), while Nigeria has only about 34,000 registered engineers and 2,333 town planners. Local governments, which control many urban and peri-urban roads, generally lack dedicated NMT units or technical expertise. Consequently, roads continue to be designed primarily for vehicles, speed limits are frequently ignored, and enforcement is uneven.

Non-motorised transport—walking and cycling—thus remains essential yet structurally neglected. This persists despite Nigeria’s international commitments, including the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety, and national strategies such as the National Road Safety Strategy II (NRSS II). Implementation gaps in law, infrastructure, and institutional coordination leave millions of Nigerians exposed to daily risk.

Taken together, the evidence points to an urgent need for legal and policy reform. A large segment of the population relies on walking and cycling, existing laws and standards fail to provide adequate protection, and the costs of inaction—measured in lives lost, economic waste, and social exclusion—are unacceptably high.

There is therefore a clear and pressing need to examine how law and policy can more effectively promote, protect, and normalise walking and cycling in Nigeria.



---

## The Policy Case for Non-Motorised Transport

Non-motorised transport is central to safe, inclusive, and sustainable mobility, yet remains under-invested despite its proven benefits.

### What the Evidence Shows

- Costs and Returns of NMT Investment
  - Pavements: ₦25–₦60m per km
  - Cycle lanes: ₦30–₦70m per km
  - Complete Streets: ₦120–₦250m per km
- Strong economic payoff: ₦8–₦12 saved for every ₦1 invested.
- Proven feasibility: Successful pilots in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano.

### Beyond Safety: The Broader Payoffs of Active Mobility

- Economic: Fewer crashes, less congestion, lower fuel and healthcare costs.
- Health: Reduced obesity, cardiovascular disease, and other non-communicable diseases.
- Environmental: Lower carbon dioxide emissions.

### What Reform Will Take

Delivering these gains demands legal reform, targeted enforcement, institutional capacity building, and sustained public awareness. Opposition from contractors, informal parking interests, transport unions, and urban elites must be managed through transitional arrangements and coalition-building with health, environmental, and citizen groups.

### Why Inaction is No Longer Tenable

Prioritising pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, mapping accident hotspots, and enforcing existing laws are not optional reforms. They are essential steps to protect vulnerable Nigerians and to secure the economic, health, and environmental dividends of non-motorised transport.

---

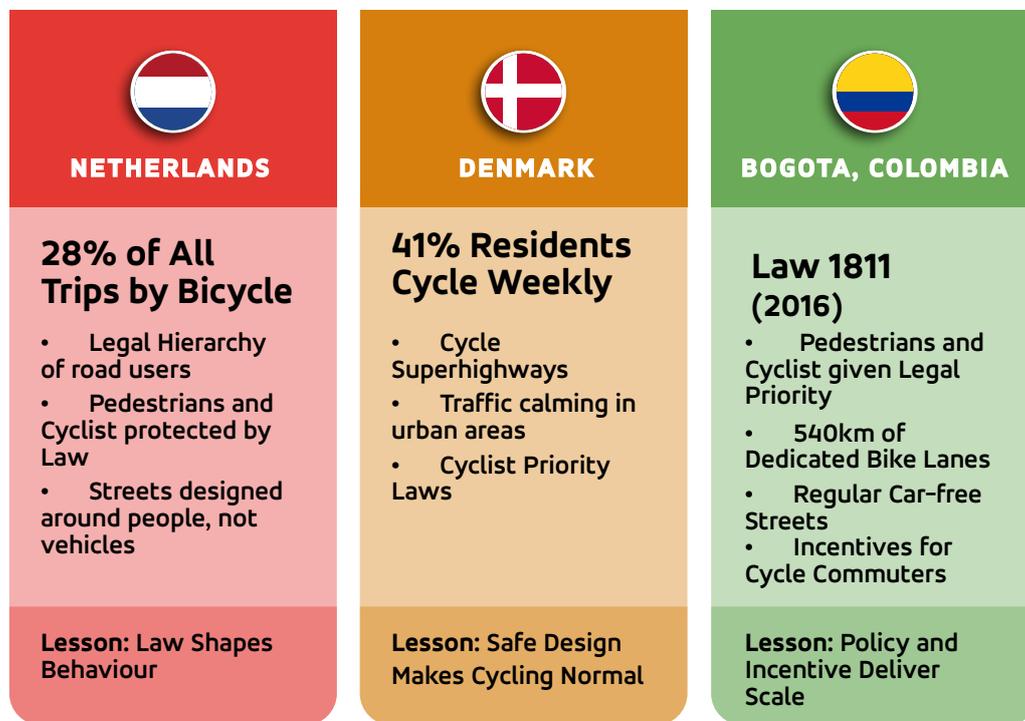
## International Experience and Lessons for Nigeria

Comparative experience shows that enabling laws and policies significantly boost walking and cycling.

**In the Netherlands**, 28% of daily trips are by bike, supported by national cycling strategies since 1975 and the 2022–2025 “Tour de Force” program. Dutch law prioritises pedestrians and cyclists, and roads follow a user-hierarchy design.

**Denmark** reports 15% of trips by bike, with 41% of residents cycling weekly. Copenhagen invests in cycle superhighways, traffic calming, and subsidised bike parking, while laws favour cyclists with right-of-way rules and low urban speed limits.

**Bogotá, Colombia**, enshrined cycling in Law 1811 (2016), giving pedestrians and cyclists priority, banning parking in bike lanes, requiring 1.5 m passing distance, and incentivising cycling through paid leave for commuters. The city also maintains 540 km of bike lanes and weekly car-free streets.



---

## Key Lessons for Nigeria

Legal mandates for infrastructure, right-of-way, and speed limits, coupled with enforcement, incentives, behaviour-change programs, funding, and institutional coordination, are essential to normalise active mobility.

---

## Policy Recommendations

To protect pedestrians and cyclists, mitigate road fatalities, and advance equitable urban mobility, Nigeria should implement the following recommendations:

### 1. Legislate for Active Mobility

**Action:** Embed NMT protection in transport and road safety laws; mandate pavements, cycle lanes, and “Complete Streets” standards.

**KPIs:** Enact federal NMT law; adopt national policy; update design manuals.

**Timeline:** 1–2 years (draft/amend laws), 3–5 years (legislation and policy adoption).

**Responsible Agencies:** Federal Ministry of Transportation (lead), Federal Ministry of Justice, FRSC, State Ministries of Transport/Works.

**Risk:** Legislative delays, political resistance.

**Mitigations:**

- Embed NMT provisions within existing transport, road safety, and urban planning legislation, reducing the need for entirely new statutory instruments.
- Advance reforms through ministerial regulations, executive orders, and updated design manuals while primary legislation is underway.
- Frame active mobility explicitly as a road safety, economic efficiency, and child-protection issue, rather than as an environmental or lifestyle agenda, to broaden political support.
- Secure early buy-in from state governments through the National Council on Transport to minimise centre–state friction and encourage parallel subnational adoption.

---

### 2. Build Safe Infrastructure

**Action:** Continuous pavements, protected cycle lanes, traffic-calmed zones; pilot and scale in Lagos, Abuja, Kano.

**KPIs:** Expand pavements/cycle lanes; reduce pedestrian/cyclist crashes by 25%; increase active mobility from 15% to 25–30% in 5 years.

**Cost:** Pavements ₦25–60M/km; cycle lanes ₦30–70M/km; Complete Streets ₦120–250M/km.

**Responsible Agencies:** Federal/State Ministries of Works, city transit agencies, FRSC.

**Risk:** High upfront costs; motorist and vendor resistance; maintenance challenges.

**Mitigations:**

- Phase implementation, prioritising high-risk corridors and pilot cities before nationwide scale-up to manage fiscal exposure.
- Integrate pavements, cycle lanes, and traffic-calming measures into routine road rehabilitation and maintenance projects, avoiding stand-alone capital costs.
- Use temporary and low-cost interventions (markings, bollards, barriers) to demonstrate benefits before permanent construction.
- Engage roadside vendors, transport unions, and motorists through consultation, coupled with designated loading, parking, and vending zones.
- Assign clear maintenance responsibility to specific agencies, with performance benchmarks linked to budget releases.

---

### 3. Enhance Enforcement

**Action:** Clear pavements, enforce yield rules, vehicle-free paths, and update the Highway Code for NMT rights.

**KPIs:** Reduce urban vehicle speeds to 30–40 km/h in high-pedestrian zones; cut pedestrian/cyclist fatalities by 25% in 5 years.

**Responsible Agencies:** FRSC, Nigeria Police (Traffic), State Traffic Management Authorities.

**Risk:** Popularity challenges, corruption, and inconsistent enforcement.

**Mitigations:**

- Begin enforcement in high-pedestrian locations such as schools, markets, and transit hubs to deliver visible safety gains and public acceptance.
- Pair enforcement with clear public communication on new rules, penalties, and implementation timelines.
- Deploy technology—speed cameras, body-worn cameras, and digital ticketing—to reduce discretionary enforcement and limit corruption.
- Establish formal coordination protocols among FRSC, the Nigeria Police, and state traffic authorities to ensure uniform standards and consistency.
- Measure enforcement success by reductions in injuries and fatalities, not by the volume of arrests or fines.

---

### 4. Change Behaviour and Public Perceptions

**Action:** Media campaigns, school road safety programs, pilot events (open streets, cycling rallies), incentives (bike subsidies, tax breaks).

**KPIs:** Double positive perception of walking/cycling; increase children walking/cycling to school to 35–40%.

**Responsible Agencies:** Ministries of Education, Health, Information, FRSC, civil society.

**Risk:** Slow uptake; needs parallel infrastructure improvement.

**Mitigations:**

- Coordinate campaigns with infrastructure improvements, ensuring pavements, cycle lanes, and safe crossings are in place before or alongside public outreach.
- Use pilot events to demonstrate benefits of walking and cycling, making changes tangible for communities.
- Engage local stakeholders (schools, parent associations, transport unions) early to build trust and participation.
- Phase messaging to match infrastructure rollout, so enthusiasm is supported by safe, practical options.

### 5. Institutional Coordination & Data Systems

**Action:** Create Active Mobility Task Force; systematic crash data collection; allocate 2–5% of transport budgets to NMT; monitor progress annually.

**KPIs:** Task Force operational; nationwide NMT data reporting established within 2 years.

**Responsible Agencies:** Federal Ministries of Transportation, Education, Health; FRSC; local governments.

**Risk:** Institutional fragmentation; funding gaps.

**Mitigations:**

- Establish the Active Mobility Task Force through a formal inter-ministerial directive with defined authority, roles, and reporting lines.
- Designate a single lead agency for NMT coordination, with other institutions bound by clear mandates and timelines.
- Ring-fence the proposed 2–5% NMT budget allocation within transport spending to protect funds from reallocation.
- Standardise crash and mobility data collection, using FRSC as the central repository for nationwide reporting.
- Require annual public reporting on NMT spending and outcomes to reinforce accountability and continuity.

## Targeted Highway Code Amendments



### PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY

Pedestrians & cyclists take precedence over motor vehicles



### SAFER URBAN SPEEDS

**30 km/h**

limits in high-pedestrian zones



### CLEAR PAVEMENTS

No parking or stopping on pavements, crossings, or cycle lanes



### SAFE PASSING RULE

Minimum 1.5 m distance when overtaking cyclists

## Conclusion

Nigeria's road system systematically endangers pedestrians and cyclists, disproportionately affecting the poor, children, and the elderly. Legal recognition of non-motorised transport (NMT), investment in safe infrastructure, rigorous enforcement, and culture change are urgent.

Pedestrian and cyclist protection must be enshrined in law and supported by consistent enforcement and well-designed infrastructure. Prioritising active mobility is essential not only for public safety but also for health, equity, and sustainable urban transport. Immediate, decisive legal and institutional reforms will reduce fatalities, ease congestion, cut emissions, and secure safe, inclusive mobility for all citizens.

## Authors

**Chinaza Igwe** is a Research Assistant at the Athena Centre, specialising in education policy research, strategic communication, and evidence-based policy analysis to inform national and sub-national education reforms.

**Cynthia Obodo**, a Research Assistant with a background in law, focuses on legal frameworks, regulatory analysis, and policy development to support governance and public safety initiatives.



### Kano Governor Yusuf Defects to APC

Abba Yusuf, governor of Kano State, on Monday, January 26, 2026, formally defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC), citing the need to act in the best interest of the people of the state.

Yusuf announced his decision at an event held at the Coronation Hall of the Kano State Government House. He said his defection was driven by the need to foster unity, stability and fast-track development across the state.

The governor had resigned from the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) on Friday, blaming deepening internal crises and prolonged leadership disputes within the party for his exit.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2026/01/kano-governor-abba-yusuf-joins-apc-gets-automatic-ticket/>

### Sixteen Officers Face Court Martial Over Coup Plot

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) in January 2026 released the names of 16 Nigerian Armed Forces officers indicted by a Special Investigative Panel over an alleged coup plot against President Bola Tinubu.

The panel found the officers culpable of serious misconduct, including alleged attempts to overthrow the government. The investigation concluded that the officers had cases to answer. The affected personnel would face a military court martial in accordance with established procedures and extant regulations.

The officers were arrested in October 2025 over alleged acts of indiscipline and breaches of service rules, including claims of plotting to overthrow the Federal Government.

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/2026/01/27/finally-military-confirms-attempted-coup-identifies-16-to-be-court-martialed/>



### External Reserves Hits

Nigeria's external reserves have surpassed the \$46 billion threshold for the first time in nearly eight years, underscoring a steady accumulation of reserves since 2025.

The milestone is reflected in the latest external reserves data released by the Central Bank of Nigeria and dated January 22, 2026.

The sustained build-up strengthens the country's buffers for import cover and enhances currency stability as Nigeria moves into a pre-election year. In December 2025, reserves had risen to \$45 billion, then a six-year high. That momentum has not faltered, carrying decisively into the opening weeks of 2026.

<https://nairametrics.com/2026/01/25/external-reserves-cross-46-billion-highest-level-in-eight-years/>

### Over 160 Worshipers Abducted in Kaduna

Police have confirmed that armed bandits abducted dozens of churchgoers in Kaduna State over the weekend, after initially denying the incident.

In a statement on Tuesday, national police spokesman Benjamin Hundeyin acknowledged the Sunday abduction and said operations are underway "with a clear focus on locating and safely rescuing the victims and restoring calm to the area."

Reverend John Hayab, head of the Christian Association of Nigeria in the North, told Reuters that at least 172 worshippers were kidnapped, with nine escaping, leaving 163 still missing.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/21/nigerian-police-confirm-gunmen-abducted-villagers-after-initial-denials>

## REGIONAL UPDATES



### Chad Regulates Police Custody

Chad's Ministry of Justice and Human Rights has reinforced police custody rules in a new circular to magistrates and judicial police officers. The directive prohibits placing suspects in custody on weekends and public holidays, except for flagrant offences, under Law No. 011/AN-SENAT/2025 of 9 December 2025, promulgated on 16 January 2026.

The reform aims to curb abuses, particularly prolonged and arbitrary detentions without judicial oversight. Custody may only be extended from Friday or before a public holiday in accordance with the law.

The circular also requires judicial authorisation for detaining individuals with known residences, unless supported by strong evidence of flagrancy. Judicial police must submit daily detainee lists to prosecutors for regular, unannounced monitoring.

<https://fr.apanews.net/not-to-be-missed/tchad-le-gouvernement-encadre-la-garde-a-vue/>

### Cameroon Teacher Killed After Ransom Kidnapping

The body of Tizih Mercy, a teacher at Government Bilingual High School Jakiri, abducted from her home last week, was discovered after she was killed by her captors.

Sources said armed men took her to an undisclosed

location and demanded over 20 million CFA francs for her release. Despite community efforts, she was killed in captivity, and her body was later found along the Jakiri–Wainamah road, sparking outrage and grief.

The incident has intensified fear in Jakiri, Bui Division, especially among teachers and civil servants, and renewed concerns over worsening security in the North-West Region, where kidnappings for ransom have disrupted education and social life amid the Anglophone crisis.

<https://cameroonnewsagency.com/separatists-kill-government-school-teacher-in-jakiri/>

### Niger Aligns Auxiliary Staff Retirement Age With Civil Servants at 62

Auxiliary staff in Niger's public administration will now be allowed to retire at 62, in line with civil servants, following the adoption of a draft decree by the Council of Ministers on Friday, 23 January 2026.

The Council approved amendments to Decree No. 2014-491/PRN/MFP/RA of July 2014, which governs the status of auxiliary staff. According to an official statement, the reform is aimed at harmonising retirement conditions across categories of public employees.

The amended decree also introduces the option of early retirement, subject to conditions outlined in the new provisions.

Authorities said the measure addresses long-standing disparities between auxiliary staff and career civil servants and forms part of wider efforts to standardise rules within the public service.

<https://fr.apanews.net/news/niger-secteur-public-lage-de-la-retraite-harmonise-a-62-ans/>

### Benin's Main Opposition Party Absent in National Assembly



Benin's opposition party, Les Démocrates, has failed to win any seats in the new National Assembly, marking the first time since its formation that it lacks parliamentary representation. Despite retaining a solid electoral base and ranking as the country's third-largest party, dispersed votes prevented it from meeting thresholds under the current Electoral Code.

Analysts attribute the setback to strategic missteps and the enduring dominance of former president Thomas Boni Yayi within the party, whose personalised leadership, once an asset, now limits its political growth.

<https://fr.apanews.net/politique/benin-revers-historique-des-democrates-aux-legislatives/>

## Disclaimer:

The insights, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Athena Centre, its affiliates, or its Board of Trustees. The information contained in this publication is believed to be based on sources that are accurate and reliable; however, Athena Centre makes no claims or guarantees regarding the completeness, accuracy, or timeliness of the data and assumes no legal liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions.

This report is intended for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or an endorsement of any specific policies, individuals, agencies, or entities. Decisions based on the content of this report are the sole responsibility of the reader. Athena Centre advises readers to seek independent verification and professional counsel before making any decisions based on the information herein.



 Block A10, Phase 2, Sani Zangon  
Daura Estates, Kado, FCT.

 [info.centre@athenacentre.org](mailto:info.centre@athenacentre.org)

 [facebook.com/Athena Centre for  
Policy and Leadership](https://facebook.com/Athena_Centre_for_Policy_and_Leadership)

 [X.com/Athena\\_Centre](https://X.com/Athena_Centre)