

2025 KAMPALA - GULU

JOE WALKER ROAD SAFETY WALK REPORT



The Joe Walker Foundation

CONTACT: +256782602061 | MARCH 2025|



Acknowledgements

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following corporate partners for their exceptional collaboration and support in making this walk a success: Next Media, Jubilee Allianz, UNOC, Rwenzori Water, Pride Microfinance, Nicole Foundation, Sheraton Kampala, and Responsive Drivers Uganda – Gulu. Your partnership was crucial in delivering a meaningful and impactful event.

A special note of gratitude goes to the Joe Walker Foundation Board – Angelo Izama, Timothy Ntale, Dr. Ivan Bamweyana, Ben Mwine, Brian Mulondo, and led by Simon Kaheru (Chairman). Your invaluable personal and professional contributions, as well as your guidance, were instrumental in ensuring the success of this year's campaign.

We are profoundly grateful to Joseph Beyanga (aka Joe Walker) for his vision, dedication, and leadership. His tireless efforts in initiating, influencing, and spearheading this campaign have brought it to where it is today. Special thanks also go to the Joe Walker Team, including Sarah Nalule Walakira (Team Leader), Odoi Joseph Owori, Dina Namulindwa, and Ssegirinya Mark Peter, whose strategic thinking, determination, and commitment ensured the smooth execution and closure of the Kampala to Gulu Walk.

A special acknowledgment is due to Carol Beyanga for her invaluable editorial expertise in refining and shaping the content of this report.

Lastly, we extend our deep appreciation to the many walkers who participated, the Traffic Police Officers for their time and feedback, the online support communities, and the personal donors whose support made this campaign possible. Your collective efforts helped bring our shared vision of road safety awareness to life



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
List of Pictures.....	3
List of figures.....	4
JOE WALKER KAMPALA TO GULU 2025 COMPREHENSIVE REPORT	5
The problem	5
The Joe Walker Trail	6
Executive Summary - Kampala to Gulu Walk: #SafeRoadsSaveLives.....	8
Recommendations	11
Conclusion.....	11
DAILY BLOG UPDATES: KAMPALA TO GULU	12
DAY ONE: Human traffic needs to be looked into.....	12
DAY TWO: Wobulenzi-Luwero stretch, a disaster waiting to happen.....	14
DAY THREE: Slow down	16
DAY FOUR: An Unfriendly Stretch for Pedestrians	18
DAY FIVE: Let's Do the Right Thing.....	19
DAY SIX: It Was Hard but Beautiful.....	21
DAY SEVEN: A Moment with Road Crash Victims, Boda Riders	23
DAY EIGHT: It Was Special, the Longest So Far	25
DAY NINE: We're Almost There	26
DAY TEN: Joe Walker in Gulu	28
Kampala to Gulu Walk; Hot, Tough (The Walking Experience)	31
GRATITUDE NOTE - APWOYO MATEK!	34
IMPORTANT LINKS	35



List of Pictures

PICTURE 1: PARTICIPANTS POSE FOR A GROUP PHOTO AT THE KAMPALA SHERATON GARDENS DURING THE 17TH NOV, 2024 REMEMBRANCE WALK.	7
PICTURE 2: THE TEAM POSES FOR A PHOTO MOMENT WITH GULU CITY WOMAN MP, BETTY AOL OCAN.....	8
PICTURE 3: JOE WALKER HAVING AN INFORMATION SESSION WITH PUPILS AT NANDA PRIMARY SCHOOL.	8
PICTURE 4: THE WALKERS POSE FOR A PHOTO UPON COMPLETION OF BOTH A VISIT AND ZEBRA CROSSING AT LACOR HOSPITAL.	9
PICTURE 5: A BROKEN DOWN TRUCK BEING TOWED ALONG THE KAMPALA- GULU HIGHWAY AWAY WHILE WALKERS PROGRESS WITH THEIR WALK.	10
PICTURE 6: A SECTION OF THE GULU WALKERS CROSSING A BUSY SECTION ALONG BUGANDA ROAD ON THE 26TH FEB, 2025.....	12
PICTURE 7: WALKERS EMBARKING ON DAY TWO'S WALK AT 5:30 AM	14
PICTURE 8: JOE WALKER CAPTURING A HAPPY MOMENT WITH MOTORCYCLISTS AT ONE OF THE ACTIVATION STOPS.....	16
PICTURE 9: THE WALKERS HAVING A FRUIT BREAK ALONG A SECTION OF THE WALK.	18
PICTURE 10: JOE WALKER HAVING A LIGHT PHOTO MOMENT WITH SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN.	19
PICTURE 11: THE ENTIRE TEAM HAVING A BREAK AT THE DAY'S LUNCH STOP.....	20
PICTURE 12: THE TEAM POSING FOR A HAPPY GROUP PHOTO	21
PICTURE 13: A SECTION OF THE ROAD WITH AN OUTDATED SIGNPOST.....	22
PICTURE 14: JOE WALKER CONDUCTING A FEEDBACK SESSION WITH MOTORCYCLISTS IN BWEYALE TOWN .	23
PICTURE 15: WALKERS JUST AFTER THE MONUMENTAL KARUMA BRIDGE DURING THE WALK.....	25
PICTURE 16: THE WALKERS HAVING A LIGHT MOMENT AT THE BOBI SIGNPOST.....	26
PICTURE 17: JOE WALKER ON A STONE-MARK WHILE SCHOOL CHILDREN ROAM FREELY IN THE BACKGROUND	27
PICTURE 18: JOE WALKER STANDING FOR A PHOTO WITH KER KWARO ACHOLI LEADERSHIP AND THE PUPILS OF GULU BAPTIST PRIMARY SCHOOL	28
PICTURE 19: THE WALKERS DURING A ZEBRA PAINTING SESSION AT GULU BAPTIST PRIMARY SCHOOL.	29
PICTURE 20: THE WALKERS CARRYING SUPPLIES TO ONE OF THE WARDS AT LACOR HOSPITAL.....	30



List of figures

FIGURE 1: A FIGURE FROM THE POLICE REPORT SHOWING CRASHES BY DAY OF THE WEEK	5
FIGURE 2: A ROAD ACCIDENT HEADLINE IN ONE OF THE LOCAL NEWS WEBSITES	5
FIGURE 3: A ROAD CRASH HEADLINE IN A LOCAL NEWS WEBSITE ON THE KAMPALA-GULU HIGHWAY A LOCAL	5





JOE WALKER KAMPALA TO GULU 2025 COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

The problem

In the recently released February 2025, [Annual Crime Report 2024](#), the Uganda Police Force reported a 6.6% rise in road crashes up from 23,608 in 2023. As a result, 25,808 casualties were registered with 5,144 resulting into death. A quick analysis of the figures shows that about 14 Ugandan lives are lost daily to avoidable death. Of these, 47% were motorcyclists. Those aged 05 – 34 years were the Most Affected Persons. As per the same report, 52% deaths were caused by careless overtaking and speeding with peak numbers recorded between Fridays and Mondays. All those Ugandans killed would have gotten home safe if we all understood that Safe Roads Save lives and played our roles to that effect, diligently. This is why Joseph Beyanga aka Joe Walker, the Founder of Joe Walker Foundation, has been on an awareness creating mission by constantly involving all stakeholders since the year 2018.

Figure 71: Crashes by Day of Week

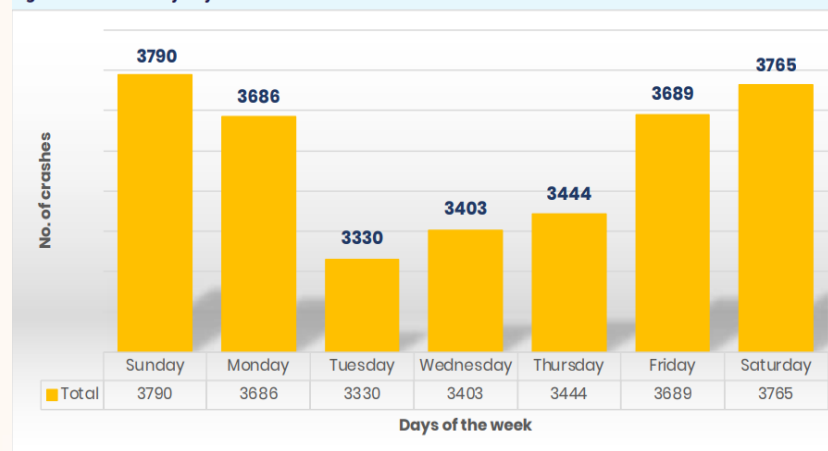


Figure 1: A figure from the police report showing Crashes by Day of the week



Figure 3: A road crash headline in a local news website on the Kampala-Gulu highway a local



Figure 2: A road accident headline in one of the local news websites



Joe
Walker

The Joe Walker Trail

On 28th February 2022, Joe Walker and friends walked 342km from Kampala to Bushenyi in a road safety awareness walk dubbed “Joe Walker and Friends - Safe Roads, Save Lives”. This was the genesis.

The next year, on 6th February 2023, Joe Walker and friends walked 250km from Kampala to Mbale in a road safety awareness walk dubbed “Joe Walker and Friends – Too Young to Die”. During both walks which were widely covered by both international and local media, different categories of road users including boda-boda riders, roadside communities, school children, law enforcers and policy makers were engaged on issues of road safety.

A few months later, on Saturday June 17th, 2023, more than 90 people joined Joe Walker in a road safety walk around Kampala covering 45km in one day where they engaged with different traffic officers on duty. Prior to the walk, a presser was held. The team also paid a visit to the Mulago National Referral Hospital, the country’s most renowned hospital for handling road safety casualties and related injuries. During the visit, participants handed some patients in the casualty ward hampers with necessities. The walk was commissioned by Dr. Rosemary Byanyima, Executive Director Mulago Hospital. The third walk that year happened on November 19th, 2023, when the foundation held a 60km Joe Walker Remembrance Relay Walk in commemoration of those that have lost their lives or been affected by road crashes.

The following year, on 26th February 2024, Joe Walker and friends, walked 300km from Kampala to Fort Portal in a road safety walk, titled “Get Home Safe”. The walk was flagged off by the Minister for Works and Transport, Hon. Gen. Katumba Wamala. The walk was successful and well covered by the media. The participants were warmly welcomed into Tooro by the kingdom officials and ministers, police and various local leaders. They engaged with roadside communities, traffic police, association leaders, elected leaders and cultural leaders along the entire route to Uganda’s tourism city.

Later, on November 17th 2024, the Foundation held the Joe Walker Remembrance Road Safety Relay Walk, an annual walk to commemorate lives lost to road crashes globally. The walk happened during The World Week of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. The walk was successful and drew over 300 participants from diverse backgrounds, including families, survivors of road crashes, and individuals walking in memory of loved ones lost to road accidents. It underscored the urgent need for safer roads in Uganda and celebrated the spirit of community and resilience among participants. The relay format was to demonstrate that road safety is a collective responsibility because we all are road users and equal stakeholders in ensuring road safety.



Picture 1: Participants pose for a group photo at the Kampala Sheraton gardens during the 17th Nov, 2024 Remembrance Walk.

The impact of the walks has shown increased awareness, discussion of road crashes on media platforms, renewed strict law enforcement of traffic laws, and a more intentional crackdown on errant drivers and motorcyclists.

Through the Foundation's signature long distance walks, there has been increased critical attention from policy makers, road experts, and urban planners thus pushing the conversation on road safety and intentional infrastructure design back to the center of sustainable developmental discussions. This is all in an effort to reduce road traffic death by 50% by the year 2030 as declared by the UN General Assembly in September 2020. Although this task is achievable, with less than half a decade left, the situation looks grim, if the current statistics stay the same. Therefore, much more needs to be done.



Executive Summary - Kampala to Gulu Walk: #SafeRoadsSaveLives

The 2025 “#SafeRoadsSaveLives” Kampala to Gulu 360km road safety walk was done among other things to bring focus to the alarming status of the Kampala – Gulu Highway, the major connecting road to the northern part of the country. To ensure the safety of the walkers and provide proximity to essential services, the walk was split into 10 rolling days averaging 36kms daily. This was to enable the walkers have decent rest, rehydrate, feed and also share the road safety message with the local communities through activations. The stops were in Bombo, Luwero, Nakasongola, Migyera, Kafu, Kigumba, Bweyale, Kamdini, Bobi and finally Gulu. The walk was characterized by among other things active exchanges between various road users (traffic police officers, school-going children, roadside market vendors, motorcyclists, medical personnel, local level administrators, cultural institutions, organized public transport groups and pedestrians), school visits, hospital visits and Zebra crossing paintings.

Some of the notable events during the walk included the following:

- Flag off by the State Minister for Transport and Works Hon. Fred Byamukama, Partner and Media Engagements on 26th February 2025
- River Kafu crossing on 1st March, 2025
- Kiryandongo Hospital casualty ward visit on 2nd March, 2025
- Bweyale taxi drivers, market vendors and motorcyclists engagement on 2nd March, 2025
- Nanda Primary School visit on 3rd March, 2025
- Karuma Bridge crossing on 3rd March, 2025
- Gulu Woman MP Visit and engagement on 4th March, 2025
- Next Media CEO visit and engagement on 5th March, 2025
- Arrival in Gulu on 5th March, 2025
- Ker Kwaro Acholi Gulu visit and engagement on 5th March, 2025
- Gulu Baptist Primary School Zebra Crossing painting on 5th March, 2025
- Lacor Hospital trauma ward visit and Zebra Crossing painting on 6th March, 2025
- Gulu Primary School road safety club visit and engagement on 6th March, 2025



Picture 3: Joe Walker having an information session with Pupils at Nanda Primary school.



Picture 2: The team poses for a photo moment with Gulu City Woman MP, Betty Aol Ocan.



Picture 4: The Walkers pose for a photo upon completion of both a visit and Zebra crossing at Lacor Hospital.

During the walk, Joe Walker and his team engaged with traffic police officers, school-going children, taxi operators, bus drivers, motorcyclists and pedestrians who were using roads at various points along the route. He talked about the need to take extra caution when using the roads, shared reflector jackets, distributed copies of high way codes, and helped school-going children cross busy roads. In addition, he listened and collected stakeholder grievances, complaints and concerns as regards the usage, design and enforcement measures currently being implemented on the Kampala to Gulu highway. The notable views shared in addition to observations by the team included the following;

- There is extreme speeding by bus drivers and government vehicles majorly during the late and very early hours of the day when enforcement is unavailable.
- The narrow design of the road makes it challenging for adequate motorist usage. As a result, there is motorist encroachment by speeding cars and motorcycles into what should have been pedestrian zones. This puts pedestrians most especially school-going children in danger of hit and run accidents.
- The predominant absence of road markings and signage over extremely long distances puts road users especially children at risk. It was observed that for over 60kms from Wobulenzi to Nakasongola, there was no single Zebra Crossing. Most bothering however was the dense population of schools and school-going children along that high accident prone road.



- There was overloading and careless driving by the livestock transporters, boda boda cyclists while on the road. At various points especially past Wobulenzi, riders were observed to be carrying more than 3 school-going children at the same time.
- There were inadequate traffic enforcement tools like speed guns along the entire route. It was observed that only one speeding gun was available on the route. This, in addition to the limited number of police checkpoints that are widely spaced, creates an enforcement vacuum that has been exploited by reckless road users.
- Ignorance and limited knowledge about proper pedestrian road usage. Most pedestrians were observed to be walking in the same direction as moving traffic, contrary to the recommended direction. Additionally, most school-going children although conversant of the road crossing instructions, seemed unaware of ensuring safety was guaranteed before finally crossing roads.
- The pressure on the roads in fast-growing towns like Bweyale and Kamdini was observed to be increasing. This was likely caused by an initial limitation in design that might have not fully incorporated the rapid population growth that both towns are currently experiencing. As a result, motorist and pedestrian populations have greatly increased beyond the constructed road handling capacity.
- Double and poor parking by majorly bus and truck drivers in the areas of Migyera, Bweyale, Kamdini and Ngatoo swamp has led to accidents. For example, in just one month, the residents around the Ngatoo stretch have witnessed 3 fatal accidents, two of which involved trailers that were broken down and parked poorly along the road.



Picture 5: A broken down truck being towed away along the Kampala- Gulu Highway while Walkers progress with their walk.



Recommendations

Based on the feedback received and interactions during the engagements while on the walk, below are the recommendations that could be implemented to improve on usage and the state of the Kampala — Gulu Highway.

- Efforts to improve the road width and design need to be made.
- Proper signage and markings especially in cattle and school dominated areas like Luwero, Nakasongola, Kigumba, Bweyale, Kamdini and Bobi need to be reinstated.
- There needs to be implementation of traffic enforcement technology to fill in for the limited traffic police human resource especially in blind spot areas and major town centers.
- Efforts to further sensitize the public especially school-going children and pedestrians, and to ask them to utilize the right walking lanes needs to be done especially within traffic enforcement vacuums.
- Clear leadership structures and systems for all public transport sectors need to be outlined.
- There is need to review and standardize the process and cost of driving permits for both cyclists and drivers.

Conclusion

When using public roads, there are general rules one must follow. This is in order to make the roads safe and usable for all. These include, being legally allowed to ride or drive on the roads; knowing, understanding and respecting the road signs; and remaining cognizant of other road users. When road users follow these rules, it goes a long way in improving road usage and averting the current situation being witnessed. As reports have indicated, most of the recorded crashes are caused by careless and reckless motorist behavior while on the roads. What this demands is that you and I play our roles diligently in making these roads more navigable so that we can all protect one another. For the Joe Walker Foundation, the job is far from complete as awareness of these issues especially among the grassroots communities is more than wanting. Going by the impact the walks have managed to create including increased awareness, renewed strict law enforcement of traffic laws, and crackdown on errant drivers and boda-boda riders, our commitment together with the continued belief and support from various stakeholders will propel us to the change we so greatly desire. No one deserves to be killed on our roads.



DAILY BLOG UPDATES: KAMPALA TO GULU

DAY ONE: Human traffic needs to be looked into

Day one of the Kampala to Gulu #JoeWalker road safety walk kicked off at 6:38am with State Minister for Transport Hon. Fred Byamukama handing us the national flag at Sheraton Hotel. The first thing we saw as soon as we started off was school children criss-crossing Kampala roads to get to school with boda bodas riding in all directions including in opposite directions of one-way roads. They were also carrying school children and in some cases adults too. At the same time a river of adults were streaming into the city from Bwaise. All through this, one thing was clear, there was human-vehicular conflict on narrow roads primarily designed for ONLY cars.



Picture 6: A section of the Gulu Walkers crossing a busy section along Buganda Road on the 26th Feb, 2025

As we got to Kawempe it got worse, the road's shoulders have been eaten away leaving deep trenches, around Kawanda and Matugga. The trucks and taxis literally park in the middle of the road. The market vendors display their merchandise on what would have been pedestrian walkways. And so do the boda bodas waiting for passengers.

Here are quick fixes that can improve this situation:



1. Construct proper secured pedestrian walkways to make the life of pedestrians more secure.
2. Get the market vendors off the road into market stalls and ensure taxis stop to pick and drop passengers at “bus stops”.
3. Get a safe parking lot for goods trucks off the road reserves.
4. Proper stages for boda bodas too would make a difference.
5. Climbing lanes for stretches in places like Kawanda and Migadde would enable harmonious use of the road by heavy trucks and other fast moving vehicles given that this is a highway, without tempting impatient drivers into reckless overtaking.

Those are my quick thoughts from my observations on day one on how we can make this road safe and save lives. We are now docked in Bombo for the night and will continue our road safety awareness Kampala to Gulu walk tomorrow.



DAY TWO: Wobulenzi-Luwero stretch, a disaster waiting to happen

The stretch between Wobulenzi and Luwero is a big disaster waiting to happen: too many schools, many speeding cars, poorly marked roads, no speed barriers, boda bodas loaded with children being dropped off at different schools, many children in different shades of uniform walking in different directions and numerous “traffic wardens” helping them cross the road at different points.

That’s the scene that opened the chapter of #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness walk. After a brief introduction to the heat on day one, we purposed to hit the road early today and be off the road before the sun unleashed its full fury. The intentions were great and logical, the reality was a reminder that sleep remains one of the strongholds yet to be conquered. The desire was to be on the road at 5:30am, but we set off at 5:55am.

We spent the night in Bombo some 200 meters off the road. All through the night I could hear vehicle after vehicle zooming past. The night seems to have heavy fast-moving traffic on this Kampala-Gulu highway. I now know why we have registered so many fatal crashes on this road at night, all our enforcement measures are limited to manual interventions and the Police is normally off the road by 7pm and they don’t return until daylight the following day. We need to rethink what can be done in the night if we want better results.



Picture 7: Walkers embarking on day two's walk at 5:30 am



As we walked out of Wobulenzi at 8am at a snail pace, we all noted that the last Zebra crossing point on this road was last seen somewhere in Kawempe, some 60km plus behind us. We rolled on like hungry lions chasing mileage with a target to get off the road before the heat set in. In Luwero town, you just can't miss the chaos. Taxis parking halfway on the pedestrian walkway and halfway on the road. Vendors scampering around running for their dear lives from a speeding random convoy of private SUVs with army escorts blaring loud sirens. When the children have settled at school, the bodas turn to ferrying goods and produce. They load as dangerously as they do with school-going children. The story is the same with trucks carrying livestock. And all of them pass the Police checkpoint.

It is worse at the checkpoint. There's a market on both sides of the road and many vehicles stop by to buy fresh produce and roadside snacks. Most of them stop the way taxis in most towns do. And the vendors risk it all in a rat race to make a sale. Down on the highway, speeding vehicles are still zooming through. There are signs indicating slow speeds but they are not followed. No wonder vendors are crying for installation of speed humps.

As we retire for the day, I am reflecting on all these observations, remembering conversations with Traffic Police officers, boda riders, and school "traffic wardens". I wonder, is any of these things new to the relevant authorities or we are simply not putting value to life and are living everything to fate?

Don't be deceived, in 2024, 5,144 people were killed in ROAD CRASHES and these were not accidents.



DAY THREE: Slow down

The #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety walk today took us from Katikamu to Nakasongola. We saw a beautiful sunrise, speeding vehicles, narrow roads, very unhappy but cheerful boda boda riders and of course, faced the scorching heat.

We kicked off at 5:45am and traversed through a long endless straight road. As soon as you join the main road, what hits you first is the fast-moving vehicles, private SUVs, heavy trucks, buses and even motorcycles. Everyone is flying, given it is early hours with no traffic police on the road. Yeah, you can imagine what that is like. Crazy. Total disregard of other road users. Guys, those road signs with **80** and **50** show the maximum speed at which you can drive. It's not a suggestion but a **limit**. Please **STOP SPEEDING**, it's for yours and everyone's good.

The boda guys echoed the same, saying as much as there are signs indicating this is an urban area and people need to slow down, the reality is people do not do so. There is therefore a need for more speed calming measures. As we interacted with some drivers at Kakooge, they raised several issues including driver education, greed and narrow roads as some of the reasons behind the madness on our highways.



Picture 8: Joe Walker capturing a happy moment with motorcyclists at one of the activation stops.



Actually, one who said he formally worked with a road construction company, says the Gulu highway is less than 12 meters wide, making it too narrow to adequately accommodate two heavy vehicles moving in opposite directions, plus a motorcycle.

He said, “Don’t even dare think of any room for pedestrians.” This account I have heard many times. Someone needs to verify and reassure people, if it’s not true. If true, let’s right the wrongs.

The other thing that’s obvious, is that our road designs aren’t forgiving; one simple mistake and you’re off the road, into a ditch reducing your chances of survival. We can do better and make our roads safer. As we take a night’s rest in Nakasongola ahead of tomorrow’s chapter of the walk, one thought is playing through my head – choices.

From the driver, boda boda rider, engineer at ministry of works, and the pedestrian, the road offers all of us an opportunity to make a choice. When making a choice please pause and think about if it’s good for you, how it will benefit your family, and how it will affect the community.



DAY FOUR: An Unfriendly Stretch for Pedestrians

The #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety walk kicked off at 6:15am at Nakasongola and we are now docked in Migyera for the day.

This is an interesting stretch so far. There is very light human traffic, lots of speeding vehicles, and animals crossing the road. It's a bit unfriendly for pedestrians. Whether the road speed signs reads **50** or **80**, the cars just fly past at insane speeds. One traffic officer Afande Baluku said he has even stopped someone who was flying at 160km/hr. and her argument was that there were no people near the road, so what was the big deal. No wonder crashes along this stretch normally record high fatalities. Add to all that madness, unforgiving roads. Many, including police traffic officers, have called it narrow. It has rather steep curves and deep trenches. I think wide shoulders, gentle slopes, safety barriers and more visible clear markings would make it safer and change the narrative. With the sun shining hotter and hitting records of **36 degrees** Celsius, we stopped our trek at midday, rested, refreshed and shall attack the road again tomorrow morning. Just like the journey to make our roads safe, it's hot grueling and taxing, but carefully we are pressing on one step at a time.



Picture 9: The walkers having a fruit break along a section of the walk.



DAY FIVE: Let's Do the Right Thing

Migyera town never sleeps; loud music and prayers blared on all night long on Thursday night. As we set out at 5:45am on day five of #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness walk, Migyera was still happening. The power blackout had nothing on them. I wonder if the party was because of the numerous truck trailers parked on both sides of the road.

Fitted with our headlights, and powered up by the early morning cool breeze, Migyera town was soon in our past. Unlike all the previous towns, we met very few school children. But consistent with other towns, many speeding cars flew by as well as a number of motorcycles, most without lights. As the darkness peeled away, it hit us that the road littered with growing potholes is mute; there were no markings or signs. Let me hope that's not the reason for speeding and reckless overtaking in corners.



Picture 10: Joe Walker having a light photo moment with school-going children.

Today we were blessed with a slightly cooler morning and we made the most of it, we were cruising. By 11am, we're already in Nakitooma, 25km from Migyera. As we strolled into the trading center, we saw most probably, the first road signs. When we exited the town, we also crossed the first Traffic Police checkpoint where we met the OC Traffic Sgt. David. As all the others, he re-echoed the enforcement challenges on this road including the narrow road. He says the standard road dimensions ought to be at least 7 meters but the Gulu highway is only 6 meters wide. That said, he shared a great piece of heartwarming news, road crashes involving buses have greatly reduced on his stretch. Since the year 2025 began they have registered ONLY ONE which he calls a big reduction. He attributes this to awareness engagements with bus drivers and operators.



With that piece of good news, I stepped on with a renewed spring of optimism that we can actually write a better story of road safety if each one of us chooses to do the right thing. Your actions and mine can make our roads safe and save lives.



Picture 11: The entire team having a break at the day's lunch stop.



DAY SIX: It Was Hard but Beautiful

Today's episode of #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness walk was hard but beautiful.

The body struggled to get up, and the last few kilometers to Kigumba (today's rest point) were a drag. The legs felt heavy. But what a beautiful start! My best friend Ethan Musolini threw us a surprise... he joined us on the road straight from Kampala as early as 6am. He left Kampala at 3am. We enjoyed watching the brilliant sunrise over River Kafu, had a crazy photo shoot, and off we continued on our trek towards Kigumba.



Picture 12: The team posing for a happy group photo

Soon after Kibangya, you will notice many cracks on the road surface; some are growing into potholes, others have just been sealed. This goes all the way to Kiryandongo District border. I think this stretch needs some real works to improve the road and eliminate those bumps that are a danger to highway traffic.

The traffic on this stretch is really light and also really fast. Many motorists are clearly driving beyond the speed limit of 80km/hr. You can also clearly see driver's flash lights at each other to warn of the presence of traffic police on the road. Guys are "driving police" not according to safety regulations but to go past the traffic check point smoothly. But that's a threat to your life and other road users.



If you follow the numerous road signs, the maximum speed is 80kmph. There are many school zones and urban centers which require you to drive at much lower speeds (30kmph) to ensure everyone's safety.

Here's how we can sort out these problems:

1. The police can't be everywhere, why are we not rolling out an automated system of speed cameras to deal with errant drivers?
2. We need someone to be bold enough to deal with drivers of government cars. These people are a danger unto themselves. And given that the population looks at them as role models, it doesn't help to have reckless behavior from them. Someone needs to get the grit to indiscriminately enforce the law.
3. This business of calling everyone you know or who you think is well placed because you have been stopped for breaking the rules must stop. It breeds impunity on the road and promotes reckless behavior.
4. The ministry of works needs to review the road signs so that they are in tune with the new regulations. If they arrest anyone driving at 100kmph on Gulu highway around Kiryandongo, who's in the wrong?



Picture 13: A section of the road with an outdated signpost

As for the boda riders and trucks' dangerous loading... let me get some rest and prepare for another day of walking. We'll talk more tomorrow.



DAY SEVEN: A Moment with Road Crash Victims, Boda Riders

Wow! The day started so bright and early. As always, we were out of where we slept at 5.30am, in this case, Kigumba. Our first stop was at Kiryandongo, where we had an interaction with boda boda riders and later visited Kiryandongo Hospital, where we had a moment to share with victims of road crashes.

If you have not been in such a situation and you visit that world, where people have suffered road crashes, you would think twice about the way you drive. Several of them have been stuck in the hospital for days with nobody to take care of them. Others have had their loved ones transferred to other hospitals, to Lacor Hospital, Gulu and others to Mulago Hospital. It's a painful scene, one that can make you rethink the way you behave as a road user.

After that soul searching moment, we walked on to our next destination, Bweyale town Council. This place is home to more than **98,000** people making it one of the most populated towns in Uganda. What hits you first as you enter it is the number of boda boda riders; it's crazy. Boda riders are literally packed at every point of the road all the way through the single road in the town, which is also the Gulu Highway.



Picture 14: Joe Walker conducting a feedback session with motorcyclists in Bweyale town



As we walked to our first meeting in Bweyale town with the taxi drivers, we witnessed a near fatal crash.

The incident occurred when a speeding car squeezing between two buses parked on either side of the road knocked a boda rider carrying two people. One of the victims who was badly injured was rushed to a nearby health facility for care. The buses were parked at a very busy area right outside the taxi park which is adjacent to a mini roadside market just before a busy T-junction.

From our interactions with the taxi drivers, market vendors and boda riders, Bweyale is not any special from other towns that we've been through; it has **congested roads, poor signage or no signage at all, faint markings or no markings at all, no pedestrian walkways and the chaotic boda riders.**

Despite the presence of a taxi park with clear leadership, taxis are still loading and offloading on the congested highway. Their leaders say it's the only way they can compete with the "highway" taxis which don't enter the park. I believe though, that they can do something to stop this madness. If their strictness on driver qualifications and experience requirement is to be believed, then they have power to enforce this discipline and reduce the mess which increases the conflict between people and vehicles on the street.

The boda riders most of whom can't identify simple road signs, accuse taxi and bus drivers of harassing them on the road. Taxi drivers also accuse boda riders of being chaotic and incompetent road users. The only two riders we met who have ever had any formal driving lessons, were both former taxi drivers. We urgently need to address the boda boda industry to dry the tears of market vendors and stop the avoidable misery and pain in trauma wards in hospitals.



Joe
Walker

DAY EIGHT: It Was Special, the Longest So Far

What a day.... #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness team lifted off from Bweyale at 5:00am, with our headlamps on. We lit up the pitch dark highway and soon we were rolling the mileage into sunrise.

When you walk through a town, it gives you an opportunity to appreciate it better; Bweyale is a big busy town that needs modern and safe infrastructure to serve, protect, and save its people.

As daylight shone upon us clearly, we could see that the road between Kiryandongo and Karuma is actually marked with some signs. Most of them seem to be fading though, so there is need for replacement.

We continued our journey and we were soon at Nanda Primary School. We had a spontaneous stop at the school sports field, where we joined the children and talked road safety.

After hiding from the extreme heat at Karuma, we resumed our walk and crossed the mighty River Nile at Karuma Bridge. The road as one moves from that area ahead is a nice one. Today's trek was special, the longest so far. As we passed through Kamdini, I couldn't stop marveling at the pace at which the town is growing. Since the town is still "young" what about giving it matching infrastructure? Cycling lanes, pedestrian walkways and lit up streets would do it a world of good.



Picture 15: Walkers just after the monumental Karuma Bridge during the walk.



DAY NINE: We're Almost There

The Kampala to Gulu #JoeWalker road safety walk set off at 6:30am from Kamdini. We traversed Nwoya, Oyam, and Omoro districts, and after 40km, we were done for the day.

Nine days since we started, we've so far covered 331km. All through this walk, for every stretch, every police checkpoint, all the chats with boda boda riders, drivers or roadside market vendors, the cries are literally the same including;

- Speeding
- Narrow road
- Unsafe or no infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.

And that was the story as we literally crawled from Kamdini to Bobi.

At Kamdini, by 6:30am, the traffic officers were already up and on duty. This was a first. Well done. As we walked past, they were already busy helping school children cross the road as others did the routine checks on motorists. Unfortunately, the poor children just like us, once on the other side of the road, had to compete with cars and bodas for foot space on the road. Kamdini is no longer a village, it's another fast-growing urban area and it needs befitting safe infrastructure for all road users.



Picture 16: The Walkers having a light moment at the Bobi signpost

As we strolled out of Kamdini, I was excited to see Zebra crossings around school zones, which is the case for every school on this stretch. We now need to make it safer with the right signage.



The heat was hot today... but we hung on. Slowly, step by step we got to our day's rest point. It's all been passion and resilience. The same that we need, to deal with the inconsiderate speeding motorists who casually overtake in corners. It's getting out of hand.

It's the same message I passed on to the Gulu City Woman MP to take to Parliament. If we continue neglecting road safety, we'll pay a way higher price as individuals, families, societies, the Church and the nation.



Picture 17: Joe Walker on a stone-mark while school children roam freely in the background

Road safety is everyone's responsibility. For now, we are camped in Bobi, recharging the legs and hopefully we will lift off for the final attack tomorrow morning.



DAY TEN: Joe Walker in Gulu

On Wednesday 5th March 2025, waltzing to Odong Romeo's *Yoo Leng*, we landed in Gulu. Beaten and exhausted but high on adrenaline of crossing the finishing line, we jumped and danced like teens at the end of year kandake. After a few photos at the Elephant, we were joined by pupils of Gulu Baptist Primary School and a team of our partners from Responsive Drivers Uganda, and Pride Microfinance. Together we marched through the city to Gulu Post Office the last point of our walk. From there we proceeded to Gang Kal Madit where we were officially welcomed to Acholi by officials of **Ker Kwaro Acholi**.

We exchanged ideas on how we can work together to make our road safe and save lives more particularly on the issue of driver behavior. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Planning and Investment of Ker Kwaro Acholi, Martin Okumu, representing the Paramount Chief pledged to adopt road safety messages and drive the campaigns in all their engagements.



Picture 18: Joe Walker standing for a photo with Ker Kwaro Acholi leadership and the pupils of Gulu Baptist Primary school

As we rolled back to Layibi to paint a zebra crossing at Gulu Baptist Primary school, I couldn't help but admire the infrastructure; Gulu has some of the best urban roads in Uganda. Even the streets are clean. We now need to eliminate a few bad manners from the users like buses loading and offloading passengers on the streets, boda riders parking on pedestrian walkways and some



vendors displaying their merchandise on some streets. Back to Layibi, as we started working on the zebra crossing, I noticed the highway is really narrow or put differently, designed only for vehicles; there are no provisions for either cyclists or pedestrians. This area has many schools, people walking in and out of the city plus loads of boda riders. While painting the zebra crossing strip, Mzee Peter Owori Obong was overjoyed saying this intervention will save many lives and make the road a bit safe for especially school children. Drivers and riders, please respect the zebra crossing and protect vulnerable road users.



Picture 19: The Walkers during a Zebra painting session at Gulu Baptist Primary School.

Exhausted and knocked out, we retired for the day. The following day started at St Mary's Lacor Hospital where Dr. Godfrey Ojok Kingston, the Director Community Health services said road crashes account for the second highest number of admissions at the hospital and year after year the situation is getting worse. The story in the trauma and surgical wards is more appalling. It's one thing to hear the numbers, but a very different story when you see the victims. They range from children to teens, and from adults to seniors. Listening to their stories is heart breaking. Maybe we should adopt community service as one of the punishments for the speeding offense and then sentence the offenders to work in trauma wards for a week.

As you walk out of the hospital, a few things hit you straight away. Lacor trading center is getting busier. Boda bodas and passenger tuk-tuks park right opposite the gate. On top of a big hospital and a training institute, there are also a few schools around. Nimule road is a highway by intent,



Joe
Walker

design and signage. But what about the hospital, schools and trading center? Well we made a contribution and painted a zebra crossing. This road however needs more speed barriers and other measures to make it safe for the community and all road users not just speeding vehicles.



Picture 20: The Walkers carrying supplies to one of the wards at Lacor hospital.

The Joe Walker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness walk was tough, hot and long but worth it. Safe roads save lives.



Kampala to Gulu Walk; Hot, Tough (The Walking Experience)

After walking a cumulative 360km in 10 days, under one of the hottest temperatures on record, the #JoeWalker Kampala to Gulu road safety awareness walk team entered Gulu City at 12:09pm on 5th March 2025.

Days before we set off, the weather flipped, offsetting our original forecast of warm temperatures to very hot. I flirted with the idea of rescheduling the walk but never discussed it with the team. And then, the team after running a dry run actually reduced the walking duration by a day meaning we had longer distances to walk on average. I prayed, worked on my mental preparation and stepped up my resilience training in the gym. I cut down on the cardio sessions to balance the body for a more challenging endurance test. But nothing could prepare me for walking 50km under 37 degrees C and be ready for 40km the following day at 36 degrees C.

The real heat wave hit us hard on Day Two as we entered Luwero. By the time we got shelter at 12:30pm, for most of us, our noses were dripping. Others nursed sore throats while others a blend of the two. As we checked in for a rest, the voices were low. That night I thought I would crash out and require more than an alarm clock to wake up. Instead, I hardly slept. It was too hot, uncomfortable, I couldn't even get under the covers. I spent the night taking endless amounts of water.

Before long, the morning rescued me from my misery and it was time to pick up our bags and hit the road again. On the third day, we did a 47km trek under the highs of 39 degrees C and lows of 21 degrees C. We attacked the day before the roosters' crow, and realized that the morning cold was not just chilly but really cold.

Having experienced the extremes of hot and cold temperatures, armed with a thorough detailed weather forecast and staring at the reality of the challenge ahead of us, we borrowed from our experience of the previous 3 walks and quickly reviewed our tactics and schedule. We decided to start our walks very early in the morning and relentlessly walk and ensure we were off the road before it was time for the sun to take center stage and show off. We also readjusted or altogether skipped some of the road safety engagements with some communities to ensure we arrived alive.

"When the hunters learn how to shoot without missing, the birds will learn how to fly without perching," that famous proverb states. We adopted, assaulted and conquered the hottest, longest and most challenging #JoeWalker road safety awareness 360km Kampala to Gulu walk. The talk may sound easy and logical, but this is what made it possible.

Don't fool yourself, without a thorough team managing all the logistic details, the challenge can easily grow wings. The amazing "#JoeWalker Army" of Odoi Joseph Owori, Dinah Namulindwa, and Mrs. Sarah Nalule Walakira the leader, carried out a dry run to inspect the route looking out for possible service providers for food, lodging, water, rest points and potatoes weeks before the walk. As soon as day one got underway, they quickly profiled us down to food and refreshment preference details. As the walkers battled with mileage under the scorching heat, provisions were none of our worries. They took care of every detail and nothing small was left to chance. They manage when and where to take a break, resume the walk and what time we should all be off the



road. All this is guided by detailed notes our route planner Dr. Ivan Bamweyana an accomplished Geostatician provides. He observes and plans the route and provides us finer details down to the weather breakdown of every hour, the terrain, elevation and everything that we'll encounter on the road. This is the invisible army that kept us safe, alive and energetic through a record walk at the peak of solar cycle 11, with a feel of 42 degrees, UV at 13 and extreme humidity of 70% plus.

My biggest take away – whatever circumstances you find yourself in, you can always navigate your way through if you are interested and determined. We couldn't control the extreme weather but we had an option to maximize the “controllables” under our control. And this team did an amazing job.

After the sun chased us off the specific daytime slots, we resorted to early mornings and late evenings. Early mornings on the Gulu highway came with exposure to new challenges: hundreds of speeding vehicles, reckless driving, and a road with no safe provisions for pedestrians. Armed with our reflective wear and headlamps, we soon devised ways to safely navigate that. We also discovered a new thrill that helped us embrace the cold chilly mornings – the hunt for beautiful sunrises. Prepared with the route plan and the features and landmarks to expect ahead, we started looking out for sunrises, and how many kilometers we needed to cover before we caught the sunrise at which river. Even when we had to hit the road at 4:30am, the prospect of catching a beautiful sunrise at a nice spot, made the abrupt changes to our schedule easy to adopt. When life throws the unexpected at you, look out for a new thrill, in any case every cloud has a silver lining.

This Kampala to Gulu walk, the 4th national walk under #JoeWalker attracted the smallest number of participants for many reasons including the extreme heat and high expenses. An individual walker needed at least Shs100, 000 per day to take care of their daily expenses that includes feeding and accommodation. The other expenses were covered by partners. Many registered and were interested in walking but the costs and timing became prohibitive. With a small team of seven passionate walkers, we had unity in purpose and everyone fully understood and embraced the cause. We had no thrill seekers. Being on the same page and walking for something bigger than any of us (to create awareness for road safety) made it easier to push on even when things got hard. It was never about us but a journey to ensure you get home safe. It also made the interactions with the roadside communities easier because any of us could easily engage and not just a #JoeWalker as it was before. Because of the heat, talking a lot became hard. We learnt to open our mouths sparingly. But with everyone on the team conversant with the mission, we shared the responsibility and spoke in turns. It's a very simple thing but it made a huge difference.

Then we stocked up with the best weapons anyone could find. To take no chances, we all packed at least an extra pair of shoes and as many sets of shirts and shorts we could afford. I went for bright colored shirts especially the colors that reflect heat and completed the outfit with “the highest cushioned running shoes... the MagMax NITRO”. I have previously used Hoka, New Balance, and Nike but the experience with this Puma MagMax Nitro was special. All the other shoes tend to get weak and soft under extreme heat and sometimes I would end up with tired calves and blisters, but this Puma gave me an extra spring regardless of the change in conditions around my feet. And I can say I finished the longest, hottest and toughest Kampala to Gulu walk with all



my toe nails intact, no single blister, and my calfs and knees in great shape. I took a gamble on Puma and they delivered as promised. If you can, please always study your challenge and equip accordingly.

Finally, we prayed and trusted God for every step, favor, provision and safety on the road. Every morning before we stepped out, we prayed. Also, with a pastor on our team, walking with the rear guard, I know he was covering us in prayer as he strolled on with his gentle giant steps. That walk without God wouldn't have been possible.

It was tough, hot and long, but every step was worth it.



GRATITUDE NOTE - APWOYO MATEK!

After 358km, we finally entered Gulu at 12pm on 6th March 2025. We started the walk 10 days earlier at 6:38am on 26th Feb 2025. It was the toughest and longest walked, under the hottest conditions on record and God has been faithful through it all. Top observations on the road are that speeding, reckless overtaking, enforcement and infrastructure designs are our top challenges in the journey to make the roads safe. That journey will be tough and challenging, and it will take selfless efforts. But it's a journey we **MUST** take.

A big thank you to fellow walkers who braved all the elements, the heat, and rising before sunrise to walk every day for 10 days all the way to Gulu: Odoi Joseph Owor, Charles Lwanga aka Uncle Chaz Miti, Lucky Ninsiima, and Ethan Musolini. Carlos Pambala, Brian Makwasi, Boaz Bakobereki, and Pastor Micah Rwothumio, your company made the heat bearable, those deep conversations made the “endless” straight roads enjoyable, the sunrises more memorable. The support crew of Mrs. Sarah Nalule Walakira, Ms. Dinah Namulindwa and our resident driver, you are our angels, thank you for the endless supply of sweet potatoes in all forms.

A big thank you to our partners, Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), Jubilee Allianz, Sheraton Hotel, Rwenzori, NBS, Pride Microfinance, Nicole Foundation, Responsive Drivers Uganda, and everyone else who made this possible.

Apwoyo matek. #SafeRoadsSavelives.



IMPORTANT LINKS

1. <https://x.com/newvisionwire/status/1893910405547716977?t=wrhQdqUMUStr9rXEeWlE5w&s=08>
2. https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/340km-road-safety-walk-kicks-off-minister-cal-NV_205611
3. https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/340km-road-safety-walk-kicks-off-minister-cal-NV_205611
4. <https://nilepost.co.ug/news/244503/joe-walkers-340km-trek-to-gulu-flagged-off>
5. <https://www.ugbulletin.co.ug/joe-walker-embarks-on-340km-trek-to-gulu/>
6. <https://joewalker.org/2025/03/07/kampala-to-gulu-walk-hot-tough/>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1K3m7s9cWuc>
8. https://youtu.be/XHqHLT_wUZU
9. <https://nilepost.co.ug/news/247018/coca-cola-joe-walker-go-the-extra-mile-for-road-safety>
10. <https://www.nilepost.co.ug/index.php/joe-walker/243609/joe-walker-set-to-embark-on-340km-kampala-gulu-road-safety-awareness-walk>
11. <https://upf.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ACR2024-Web.pdf>