

Best Children's Health & Development Advocacy 2026 – South Africa

ChildSafe South Africa, founded in 1978 and headquartered in Cape Town, is a registered, tax-exempt non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting children from preventable injury. Working across sectors with corporate partners, government departments, academic institutions, and civil society, ChildSafe addresses one of the most overlooked global public health challenges: unintentional childhood injuries.

Injuries remain among the leading causes of death and disability for children in low- and middle-income countries, yet every child has an inherent right to grow, learn, and play in a safe environment. By combining data with targeted public outreach and policy influence, ChildSafe bridges the gap between structural safety frameworks and the lived realities of families through its interventions.

Injury prevention is not merely an organisational goal; it is a prerequisite for sustainable development and a foundational element of comprehensive child safeguarding worldwide.

ChildSafe Executive Director Zaitoon Rabaney has been a leading voice in reframing global definitions of child protection. While international safeguarding conversations often focus on abuse, exploitation, and neglect, she argues that safeguarding must also confront the silent epidemic of unintentional injuries, which remain one of the greatest threats to children's survival and their long-term development.

She explained: "These injuries are not random. They follow patterns. They are structured. They are predictable. And because they are predictable, they are preventable."

Rabaney's call to action is clear: environmental safety must be integrated into early childhood development, responsive caregiving, and national safeguarding frameworks across South Africa, with lessons applicable throughout the broader global South.

ChildSafe's advocacy reached a major milestone through its contribution to South Africa's National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children (NSAAC), a Cabinet-approved framework aligned with international child-rights commitments. The organisation successfully championed the inclusion of unintentional injury prevention as a core component of this national strategy.

A landmark achievement was the formal recognition of school zone safety as a national priority. The NSAAC now mandates traffic-calming measures and reduced speed limits around schools, an intervention widely recognised by the World Health Organization as one of the most effective ways to prevent child pedestrian deaths.

This Cabinet-level integration elevates injury prevention from a peripheral concern to a binding national priority. It affirms what ChildSafe has long argued: creating safe environments for children is a matter of urgent importance.

To this end, ChildSafe anchors its operations in rigorous, evidence-based injury surveillance, tracking the injury profile of children aged 0 to 14. Across South Africa, and consistent with global trends in low- and middle-income countries, the leading causes of injury, hospitalisation,

and child-related deaths include road traffic accidents, severe burns, falls, drowning, and ingestions.

The consequences extend far beyond the initial injury. Children often require prolonged physiotherapy, occupational therapy, reconstructive surgeries, and extended time away from school. Many face lifelong physical, psychological, and developmental challenges, placing immense strain on families and public health systems.

This is why ChildSafe delivers its Pillars of Strategic Intervention. These pillars form the architecture of prevention, each one translating insight into measurable impact. The three strategic pillars are advocacy, education, and research.

Guided by these pillars, ChildSafe's strength lies in its extensive network of medical professionals, researchers, academic institutions, and corporate partners. While its programmes operate within South Africa, the organisation's outputs, policy contributions, and advocacy models hold relevance for countries across the African continent and other regions facing similar socioeconomic pressures.

Looking ahead, ChildSafe is expanding its advocacy footprint and strengthening its research capabilities. By leveraging modern communication channels, the organisation ensures that lifesaving safety information reaches caregivers quickly and consistently.

The ultimate measure of success is simple: greater public awareness, more injuries prevented, hospital admissions reduced, and young lives protected.

This commitment to excellence has earned ChildSafe international recognition at the 2026 Africa Excellence Awards, where it was honoured as the Best Children's Health and Development Advocacy Organisation 2026 – South Africa.

Benchmarking a non-profit organisation directly alongside national, international, and multisectoral for-profit innovators, captains of industry, and multinational corporations demonstrates that this South African non-profit organisation can confidently stand shoulder to shoulder with leading institutions in the developed world.

It serves as a powerful testament to ChildSafe's professional leadership and its defining influence in shaping the child safety and injury-prevention discourse within South Africa and across the African continent.

Through sustained advocacy, research, and collective action, ChildSafe South Africa will continue to build a world where children can explore, play, and grow in pursuit of its mission: to keep children free from harm.



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