

Banda Helms

Meet Banda Helms

Building skills for a safe and prosperous future: Banda Helms's journey at Zambia's Industrial Training Centre

When Banda Helms retired after a career as a secondary school teacher, he wasn't ready to slow down.

At 62, encouraged by his three children, he decided it was time to learn a new skill that would help him support his family and community. He enrolled at Zambia's Industrial Training Centre (ITC), where he is training to secure his Class C truck licence.

"I opted to come to ITC because of the passion that I had," Banda explains. "When I retired, my children said, 'Daddy, you're still energetic and strong."

Driving offered a practical future. Rather than relying solely on farming, Banda saw the opportunity to transport goods, support agricultural work and earn an income.

"I chose driving because it makes it easier to transport things, bring them where they're needed and make money."

Banda is one of thousands of drivers who have benefited from training at the ITC, where Transaid has worked in partnership since 2006. Together, Transaid and the ITC have helped strengthen professional driver training across Zambia, supporting more than 25,000 drivers and riders to develop the skills they need to keep themselves and others safe on the road.

Road traffic crashes claim an estimated 1.19 million lives every year and remain the leading cause of death for young people aged 5–29 worldwide. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals call for halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.

To work towards this target, Transaid uses a 'train the trainer' approach to build capacity for professional driver training. By working alongside local instructors to strengthen their skills and knowledge, the programme builds lasting capacity within Zambia's own training institutions, ensuring high-quality driver training continues long into the future.

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For Banda, the quality of the training has stood out from day one.

"The training is fantastic, very good," he says. "The instructors are highly skilled. It's a government institution, and there are also partners like Transaid supporting the training. It means there are more chances for people like us to learn."

As part of his training, Banda is learning how to inspect vehicles, carry out basic mechanical repairs, recognise road signs, and, crucially, defensive driving.

"We check the vehicle, learn how it functions, then go on the road," he explains. "We also learn a bit of mechanics, so if something small goes wrong, there's no need to call someone from far away. I can deal with it myself."

For Banda, defensive driving is one of the most valuable lessons. "Most of the people learning to drive never came to proper training," he says. "They just learned from friends, so they drive carelessly. If you don't know how to defend yourself, they'll crash into you. Defensive driving is very good."

He has seen first-hand the challenges drivers face in Zambia, from narrow roads and congestion to potholes and dangerous driving behaviour. Good training, he believes, helps drivers anticipate risks and make safer decisions that protect everyone on the road.

The course has already changed the way he thinks behind the wheel.

"My driving has changed because now I'm learning from highly skilled instructors," he says. "We're learning the rules, the road signs and why they're important. Driving a vehicle isn't like just walking."

For Banda, the training offers immense economic opportunity. "The future is bright," he says.

When asked what he would say to someone considering training at the ITC, his answer is immediate.

"I would recommend people to come here. The instructors are highly trained."

Banda hopes that continued investment in training vehicles will allow even more students to benefit in the years ahead. As enrolment continues to grow, strengthening the ITC's capacity will help ensure future generations of professional drivers receive the same high-quality training.

Two decades after our partnership began, the ITC continues to equip new generations of drivers like Banda with the skills they need to drive professionally and safely. Transaid and the ITC's 'train the trainer' approach invests in local instructors, helping to ensure training capacity for years to come.

Learn more about our road safety work at **www.transaid.org.**



An ITC instructor demonstrates a vehicle safety check