

# TRANSPORT SECTOR

## **The Transport Sector and HIV in Humanitarian Situations**

During a crisis, the effects of poverty, powerlessness and social instability are intensified, increasing people's vulnerability to HIV. When humanitarian agencies step into an emergency situation they primarily depend on transporters to move and deliver relief items. Low levels of knowledge about HIV and AIDS, low condom use, multiple partners and poor access to health services coupled with high mobility and prolonged periods away from home make transport workers particularly vulnerable to HIV infection.

When working in a context that is influenced by HIV, it is a responsibility of all humanitarian agencies to ensure that their activities do not inadvertently contribute to the epidemic. In areas of already high HIV prevalence, interaction between transporters, sex workers and community members can intensify the situation. A 2007 study that mapped the Mombasa-Kampala corridor found extensive co-mingling among transporters, traders, sex workers and local residents (Morris, C. and Ferguson, A.). Even in relatively low prevalence areas, commercial centres, transport hubs and communities living along transport corridors can become 'hotspots' for STI and HIV infection.

Being exposed to risk and being in a vulnerable environment doesn't necessarily translate into higher HIV prevalence. However, truck drivers have undoubtedly played a role in the transmission of, and are at risk of infection with, HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as on the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia.

Long-haul truck drivers operate under extremely harsh and stressful conditions. They must stop at borders and checkpoints and are often subject to long delays and stopovers that provide opportunities for multiple sexual partners. Sex workers congregate at these stops, and even more so during times of emergencies when livelihoods have been destroyed and more women are driven into sex work.

The same 2007 mapping study (Morris, C. and Ferguson, A.) found on average 2400 trucks parked overnight at 39 'hotspots' between Mombassa and the border towns with Uganda. These spots have an estimated sex worker population of 5600 women.

Humanitarian organizations that rely on the transport sector (road, rail, sea and air) to maintain an uninterrupted relief supply chain hold a unique organizational position. Through their contacts with transport companies they are able to reach truck drivers, porters, boat operators, dock workers and rail workers with comprehensive HIV information, effective behaviour change messages, leadership and networking skills.

Moreover, mobile transport workers can also play a key role in HIV prevention when trained as peer educators and enlisted to help spread HIV prevention messages. The Avahan India AIDS Initiative is an excellent example of how truck drivers and sex workers can be trained as AIDS educators and behaviour change agents.

For truckers and other mobile workers, formal health services have failed to provide convenient, accessible healthcare, which can contribute to an increased risk of HIV and STIs and result in lack of treatment.

Primary health care services that include treatment for common chronic ailments, HIV/STI prevention information, counselling, condoms, STI treatment, HIV testing and referrals to treatment programmes must take into account the specific needs of mobile workers, such as hours of operation and vehicle security. Initiatives such as the North Star Foundation network of drop-in Wellness Centres are a good example of health services designed specifically for truck drivers on the job.

A number of humanitarian agencies have implemented HIV awareness programs for transport workers involving information, education and communication activities. The World Food Programme (WFP) has conducted HIV training for its transporters in a number of countries including Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Myanmar. In addition, WFP is leading the development of a multi-stakeholder HIV prevention initiative aimed at transporters in the democratic Republic of Congo.

At minimum, humanitarian agencies should emphasize Codes of Conduct and ensure that transporters have the basic facts about HIV and access to condoms. In addition, data from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, transport employers' associations and unions, UNAIDS and other sources can help ensure that HIV prevention efforts are appropriately targeted, and that the transport sector is well utilized in general HIV prevention efforts.

Transport workers can be an important partner for scaling-up HIV prevention efforts within the acute phase of an emergency. In many situations they are the first ones to have access to the affected populations, therefore their potential for contributing as active agents within the national HIV response to humanitarian emergencies should be harnessed.

One example of this was the Safe Migration Campaign undertaken by IOM in Zimbabwe during the massive population movements caused by the government-led slum clearing operation. Truck drivers involved in the transport of emergency relief items were invited to be community HIV educators: disseminating HIV messages at food and non-food distribution sites, distributing HIV IEC materials and condoms. The name of the campaign illustrates their crucial role: "Drivers needed to fight HIV".

### **Selected Resource**

1. Social protection: [ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work](#)
2. [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2005\)](#) , HIV and Mobile Workers: A review of risks and programmes among truckers in West Africa.
3. [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2007\)](#) , Report from the Regional workshop on HIV in the road transport sector in Southern Africa.

4. [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2006\)](#) , Mobility and HIV vulnerabilities factors in 4 sites along the transport corridors in Namibia
5. [International Transport Workers' Federation \(ITF\) \(2007\)](#) , AGENDA Magazine, Issue 1, How unions can help close the door on HIV.
6. [International Transport Workers' Federation \(ITF\) \(2008\)](#) , AGENDA Magazine, Issue 2, Rest without risk?
7. [World Bank \(2008\)](#) . Lessons learned from mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in transport sector projects in sub-Saharan Africa, Report No. 43075-AFR.
8. [WorldFood Programme \(2008\)](#) . HIV and AIDS and the Transport Sector Fact Sheet.
9. [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2008\)](#) , Sex by the Side of the Road: HIV Vulnerability along Road Transport Corridors in Africa

## Guidelines and Tools

1. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) \(2005\)](#) , Using the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work: Guidelines for the transport sector.
2. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) \(2008\)](#) , Driving for Change: A toolkit on HIV/AIDS for the road transport sector.
3. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) and Family Health International \(in draft\)](#) , HIV/AIDS behaviour change communication toolkit for the workplace.
4. [World Food Programme \(2006\)](#) , Getting Started: WFP support to HIV/AIDS training for transport and contract workers.
5. [World Food Programme/Logistic cluster](#) , DRC (2007), Bilingual questionnaire for potential partners in the HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative in the transport sector including ports, road, rail, lake and river.
6. [Multi-stakeholder Cross-sectoral Partnerships](#) North Star Foundation <http://www.NorthStarFoundation.org>
7. Avahan India AIDS Initiative <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/avahan/Pages/overview.aspx>

## Research

Morris, C. and Ferguson, A. (2007), Sexual and treatment-seeking behaviour for sexually transmitted infection in long-distance transport workers of East Africa, *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 83:242-245