

AIDS Brief

for sectoral planners
and managers

Transport Sector



The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a global crisis which demands urgent attention and committed, sustained action by alliances of individuals, organisations and sectors. The AIDS Brief series has been developed to support the conceptualisation and implementation of key sectoral responses. The transport sector is essential for economic and social development. It provides vital links between centres of production and markets and gives people access to employment, health, education, recreation and social services. Many people working in the sector are mobile, which affects their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. In addition, due to the specialised nature of many jobs in the sector, the transport sector is more susceptible to contracting HIV/AIDS than many others. Finally, as a result of its central importance to many other sectors, the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the transport sector will have significant implications for most other sectors.

BACKGROUND

Definition of the Transport Sector

Transport sector activities may be defined as those activities concerned with the movement of people and goods. This may be further subdivided by mode of transport (air, road, shipping, rail), distance travelled (long to short) and what is carried (passengers, freight or mixed).

Facts about the Transport Sector

Transport is central to development: without the movement of goods and people, countries stagnate and economic growth decreases. The World Bank notes that it represents the 'wheel' if not the engine of growth. Transport is essential to national economies, allowing both internal and external movement of goods and services. It plays a crucial role in many other sectors - without adequate transport infrastructure and provision, the productive sectors would be unable to move goods to markets or obtain raw materials; tourism would cease; and normal social and cultural life would be crippled. Transport is essential for the effective functioning of urban areas and is vital for poverty alleviation in rural areas.

Transport is also a significant economic sector in its own right. The World Bank estimates that transport (including storage and communication) accounts for 5,34% of GDP in low-income countries and 6,78% in middle-income countries (World Bank Development Report 1994). In 1994, transportation-related



final demand accounted for 11% of the total value of US GDP. On average, value added by transport is estimated to account for 3 - 5% of GDP and transport commonly accounts for 5 - 8% of total paid employment (World Bank, 1998).

In most developing countries the transport sector comprises a mix of private and public sector activities. In general, railways, airports

and ports are operated as monopolies. The provision of transport infrastructure is usually paid for by government, even if the work is carried out by the private sector. In line with most developing countries' policy there has been pressure in recent years to privatise and deregulate the transport sector, or at least to make it more commercial and less dependent on government subsidies. The most common example of this has been the privatisation of many national airlines. Public investment in transport typically accounts for between 2 and 2.5% of GDP and may rise as high as 3.5% in developing countries which are modernising outdated transport infrastructures or building new infrastructures.

Transport, the physical movement of people and goods, is dependent on the provision of an adequate infrastructure - roads, airports, ports and railways. Those employed in the construction of transport infrastructures also need to be considered when describing the transport sector (see also the AIDS Brief for the *Construction Sector*).

Features of the Transport Sector

- Transport may be provided for short or long distances and may cross borders - both in moving between contiguous countries and across longer distances - by air or water.
- There are two main groups of people involved

- the providers of the services (crews) and those who use them (passengers).

- Most transport operators in road, air, rail and shipping are large companies or parastatals.
- In road transport however there may also be small operators including those with only

one vehicle.

- Transport is usually regulated by local, provincial and national laws governing entry into the sector and safety measures.
- Cross-border transport is governed by international conventions and agreements.

AIDS AND THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

The transport sector has a very important relationship with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and in some areas may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of the epidemic. The reason is simple. Many of those involved in the sector are mobile and spend time away from their homes. In fact, long-distance truck drivers, maritime, rail and air-workers spend the majority of their working life away from home. Research in South Africa revealed that 71% of long-distance truck drivers had spent 15 or fewer days at home in the six months prior to the study. It is recognised that mobility may lead to increased opportunities for sexual activity with new partners and thus put people at risk of HIV infection. This applies not only to crews and transport workers but also to travellers and those involved in the construction of transport infrastructures.

It is thus clear that the susceptibility of the sub-sectors and the vulnerability of travellers and of those working in the sector is strongly linked to their mobility. Also, improving transport services means more people; drivers, train crews, airline crews, and sailors; spend longer away from home and apart from their families. Research shows how these circumstances provide opportunities for increased sexual activity.

- A study of long-distance truck drivers in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa found that long absences from home, stressful working conditions, limited recreational opportunities and restricted social conditions combined to stimulate a flourishing commercial sex network along the freeway system. The study found that 35% of drivers surveyed had had two or more partners in the week prior to the study and condom use was absent or irregular.
- A 1990s Thai survey found that all long-haul truck drivers "had commercial sex at least once, 60% at truck stop brothels, 38% at other brothels en route, and 2% at cargo stops en route."
- A 1993 study in Cameroon found that bus and truck drivers spent an average of 14 nights away from home and 25% had sex every night that they were away.
- On the Dar-es-Salaam highway in 1996, HIV prevalence was found to be 28% for truckers and 56% for their female partners.

Labour

The transport sector is highly dependent on labour and for many operations this will be particularly skilled labour. For example most

employees in the airline industry will have professional or technical qualifications. Where operations are dependent on certain categories of scarce staff the impact of AIDS may be exacerbated. In general there will be few possibilities for substitution of labour.

In terms of the trucking industry there is real pressure to keep drivers on the road - where these drivers are becoming ill this is a problem. In addition, this makes it very difficult to put in place information/education programmes.

The loss of colleagues, increased workloads, potential discrimination and general uncertainty about HIV/AIDS may undermine staff morale.

Productivity

The demands of globalisation have been felt particularly in the transportation and communication industries. Goods and people need to be moved faster over longer distances to respond to the requirements of the market. The pressure falls squarely on the transportation industry to ensure that these movements meet exacting deadlines. The productivity of the sector will be affected by morbidity, mortality and ill-health retirement. The loss of skilled and experienced labour within the industry can be detrimental, as flows of goods and people are interrupted or discontinued. Replacement of highly skilled workers such as pilots, drivers with special licences and technically skilled shipping crews is not easy and may also result in declines in productivity.

Other absenteeism

If workers in the transport industries are themselves not absent due to illness, they may take time off to attend funerals or to care for sick family members.

Operations

The costs of the epidemic will be felt throughout the workforce - the degree to which this happens will depend on how employee benefits are structured. If an employer simply pays a wage for work and the employee makes his/her own provision for health care, pensions, insurance and housing - or looks to the state to provide these - there will not be an immediate impact on payroll costs. It must be noted that if, in the longer term, the state has to bear these costs then either revenue will have to be re-allocated or additional revenue raised, possibly through higher taxes.

Transportation has increasingly become an out-sourced rather than a core function of many

businesses that have chosen to depend on contractors to carry out delivery functions to downstream clients. Just-in-time delivery is a key feature of many production chains and business operations outside the transport sector. The impact of HIV/AIDS may render these vulnerable to breakdowns in the transportation of goods.

Building and maintaining transport infrastructures may involve groups of workers who are housed away from their families, often for long periods of time. For example a construction company might send a team into a remote part of the country to build a new road or carry out maintenance. The workers are usually men, housed in an all male environment, and being away from their families increases the likelihood of their having more sexual partners. Furthermore their comparative wealth enables them to purchase sex. Studies have shown that in Malawi, road construction has been linked to the spread of HIV, while in Lesotho the Highland Water Project has led to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases in the remote mountain areas. Thus, the extra sexual activity associated with the circumstances in which the workers find themselves increases the chance of exposure to HIV, not only for the workers but also for the communities in the areas in which they are working.

Training and replacement of labour

The replacement costs of labour will vary depending on the qualifications required for a specific operation, the level of skills employed and the availability of labour. If suitable labour is not available then training may be required. Of particular importance for the sector is the concept of key employees. For example, airline pilots and technical operators on board vessels are difficult to replace and expensive to train and are key personnel responsible for sustaining core businesses.

Many transport industries bear the costs of training personnel. This is true of airline companies who make significant investments in training pilots, and long-distance hauliers who invest in training long-distance truck drivers through in-house training programmes or through training boards to meet accreditation requirements. In some countries, this training is subsidised by government grants. Losing such employees will have extremely adverse effects on the industry not only in terms of productivity losses but also in terms of investment losses.

IMPACT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Are operators and crews spending significant amounts of time away from home and family?
- ✓ Are workers employing the services of commercial sex workers?
- ✓ Are risky sexual practices common?
- ✓ Are workers aware of safe sex practices?
- ✓ Are workers using drugs and alcohol?
- ✓ Are workers easily replaceable?
- ✓ Are workers frequenting areas of high transmission such as bars, truck-stops?
- ✓ Which areas of core business are vulnerable to increases in absenteeism and sick leave?
- ✓ How will company benefits and allowances be affected by HIV/AIDS?
- ✓ Does staff training include a health education component?

SECTORAL RESPONSE

The sectoral response should be targeted at four main areas of concern: the people who work in the railways, roads, airlines and shipping services; professionals engaged in the management of the sector; travellers; and people employed in building and maintaining the transport infrastructure. All these groups must be appropriately targeted if the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS are to be reduced.

Operating transport services

As people in the sector form a small and relatively easily identifiable group the problem can be readily addressed. Designing awareness campaigns for the sector has been done with some success in Tanzania, where both truckers and the women serving them at truck stops have been targeted. Companies gain by protecting their employees, as they will avoid the costs of illness and the need for eventual replacement and costly training. Companies do not necessarily need to develop their own education packages, they can draw on government or non-governmental organisations. However, companies do need the will to introduce programmes, including making condoms continuously and easily available.

There are other actions that might be developed in relation to working practices and conditions. For example some trucking companies in South Africa have established rest stops. The benefits are security, and meal and rest facilities for drivers. Although the stops were established primarily for improved security, the HIV prevention benefits have been considerable, with evidence of a decrease in risky sexual encounters.

Government needs to be supportive of transport sector initiatives. Actions they might take include, for example, reviewing border-crossing formalities, which could be speeded up to reduce drivers' waiting times.

International workers, tourists and other travellers

This group can be a prime vector in the spread of HIV/AIDS regionally and internationally. Today, many more people travel in search of work worldwide, but unlike previous generations, they return home every year, or possibly more frequently. Leisure travel is the fastest growing global economic activity. This type of mobility is also associated with greater opportunities for sexual encounters, as people away from home and familiar surroundings are subject to a range of social, psychological and economic pressures. However, increasing mobility is usually a national development goal as it leads to economic growth, increases access to services, and improves quality of life.

Of course, travel increases exposure to a range of diseases. An outbreak of bubonic plague in India in 1994 led to all but two international airlines suspending their flights. At airports all over the world travellers were scrutinised for illness. Eleven fever cases arriving in New York on a flight from India were quarantined; none had plague but four had malaria and one typhoid fever.

Some groups of travellers may be at particular risk. These include women traders (over 250 000 visas are issued annually for Zimbabwean women to shop in South Africa, to give just one example), refugees and armies. Providing HIV education for their clients is not the responsibility of the transport sector, however it does have two important roles. Firstly the National HIV/AIDS Control Programme should be made aware of potential increases in movement in order that the mobile populations can be targeted. Secondly the transport sector should co-operate with other AIDS prevention initiatives. For example, drivers might display anti-AIDS stickers on vehicles, migrants might be reached at border points where there are inevitably long queues and delays, and airlines might put information leaflets in seat pockets.

Transport managers, in both the government

and the private sector, are drawn from a small group of educated and professional people in developing countries. They are in scarce supply, expensive to train, and take time to replace. Evidence suggests that in Africa the levels of HIV among managers and professionals are as high as, or higher, than in the general population. Therefore management needs to identify key personnel and put in place contingency plans for increased illness and death. Where cases of terminal illness are identified, strategic plans for succession and recruitment need to be considered. Moreover, continuous HIV education and training programmes are vital for this group.

Building and maintaining transport infrastructure

Reducing the exposure to HIV during road-building and maintenance programmes (for both workers and communities) must involve several agencies and organisations. Governments and private sector firms using a mobile labour force should, through training, increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and improve the sexual health of their workers. Where on-site health services are provided they can be used for HIV/AIDS education, distribution of condoms and the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Even if there is no company health facility, condoms should be provided and early treatment of STDs encouraged.

Employment conditions for workers should provide for the movement of their families where practicable, and where this is not possible, frequent leave should be encouraged. Furthermore, government should encourage the employment of local labour and require building and maintenance contract documents to cover these issues. Most countries have National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes, and people involved in the construction and maintenance of transport infrastructures should link with the country's programme in order to obtain support.

ACTION CHECKLIST

Checklist of management strategies

- ✓ Develop a risk profile of the workforce, identifying risk factors for infection such as long separations from home, prevalence of STDs, condom usage, knowledge of and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and risky sexual practices, alcohol and drug use.
- ✓ Develop a profile of the environment, identifying situations for sexual networking such as truck-stops, bars, guest-houses along highways and transport infrastructure projects that create conditions of relative wealth in areas of poverty.
- ✓ Conduct an institutional audit to determine possible areas of breakdown in business operations; ability to recruit and train replacement labour; and potential peer educators within the workforce.
- ✓ Estimate direct and indirect costs due to HIV/AIDS including absenteeism; sick leave; compassionate leave; replacement, recruitment and training costs; medical costs; disability/ill-health retirements; pension and dependent benefits; funeral and death benefits and group life assurance.
- ✓ Liaise with external institutions such as NGOs, CBOs, national and local Departments of Health and Transport, unions, industry training boards and other companies within the sector.
- ✓ Make health education modules a part of accreditation requirements.
- ✓ Develop methods to monitor and evaluate interventions.
- ✓ Develop a company or sectoral AIDS policy that is clear, non-discriminatory and acceptable in terms of national legislative frameworks.

Who	Why	What	Where	Partnerships and Wider Action
Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly mobile group with increased exposure to STDs and HIV Work under stressful conditions away from home and families for long periods of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide health education and HIV prevention programmes, utilising peer education Distribute condoms Treat STDs Reduce time spent away from home Provide entertainment opportunities at rest areas. Discourage abuse of alcohol and narcotics. Reduce time at border posts Use transport infrastructure such as stations, bus terminals and taxi ranks for public awareness campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas of high transmission such as truck-stops, bars and shebeens Communities close to truck-stops and rest areas Ports Airports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target commercial sex workers as well as operators in HIV and STD prevention programmes Increase access to local clinics for treatment of STDs Form partnerships with local health departments, clinics, community health workers, peer educators drawn from communities, owners and managers of truck-stops Establish relationships with NGOs/CBOs who can monitor and evaluate programmes Establish a coalition with Departments of Health and Transport and industry training boards to write policy and disseminate information
Building and maintenance crews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in numbers of sexual partners due to separation from family Relative wealth makes them more likely to purchase sex, especially from the communities located along roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide health education and HIV prevention programmes, utilising peer education Include HIV/AIDS programmes as a requirement in tender documents Distribute condoms Treat STDs Use local labour Establish income-generating projects for women within communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities located along construction and maintenance routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form partnerships with the Department of Health, local peer educators, community health workers, local clinics, church and youth groups, elders from communities and local NGOs/CBOs
Travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourists tend to drink more, use drugs more and are generally more adventurous when on holiday. These adventures occasionally include taking sexual risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information at points such as airport lounges, hotel rooms, bars Make condoms freely available to both tourists and commercial sex workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels, bars, night-clubs, travel agencies, airports, tourist information bureaux and on websites promoting holiday destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form partnerships with the Departments of Tourism and Health, and with travel agents
Management professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though perhaps not especially at risk, this group represents professional and skilled cadres who are difficult to replace Loss of people in these groups represents significant costs to employers in terms of recruitment, training and benefits. The public sector is particularly at risk due to generous benefit packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide HIV/AIDS and STD education and information programmes Facilitate condom distribution Monitor illness and absenteeism Develop comprehensive workplace policies on HIV/AIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace prevention programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with senior management, operators

SUMMARY

More efficient and affordable transport means more mobility, which may inadvertently facilitate HIV transmission. Imaginative actions, however, can address

this challenge and transport is a key roleplayer in any multi-sectoral response. Policy and decision-makers need to consider the role of transport in disease

prevention and mitigation. As the people in the sector form a small and easily targeted group, the problem is not insurmountable.

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South Beach AIDS Project, Washington <http://www.sobeids.org>

Trucking against AIDS Project, South Africa <http://www.transport.gov.za>

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