Towards establishing the impact of driver training on saving lives in developing countries
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1. Introduction: Road Safety, A ‘Global Health Crisis’

The World Health Organisation’s Global Status Report on Road Safety (2013) estimates that some 1.24 million people lose their lives on the world’s roads each year, with a further 20 to 50 million people suffering injury and/or disability. The report indicates that some 90% of these deaths occur in developing countries where increased per capita vehicle travel is increasing road traffic crashes. The WHO estimates that 28,500 people died in East Africa Community road crashes in 2010 (up from 8699 in 2007). Road crashes are now the leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 29.

The cost of road crash fatalities and injuries represents billions of dollars at a national level. At the household level, where a family’s main breadwinner is killed or injured, a household can be plunged into poverty, suffering the impact of a significant loss of income and often also incurring expensive hospital bills to say nothing of the emotional cost. The majority of victims of road traffic crashes are pedestrians and passengers, a fact which dictates that there should be a focus for road safety work on improving the safety of passengers and vulnerable road users. Transaid’s Road Safety Programme’s objective is to contribute to improved training standards for drivers of large passenger and freight vehicles through building the capacity of trainers, and advocating for the adoption of improved standards nationally.

2. Transaid’s Road Safety Programme

Raising Professional Driving Standards

The majority of economically developing countries have insufficient laws and standards in place to adequately address the increasing number of road deaths and injuries. In many cases a lack of capacity within government means that a substantial amount of people driving motorcars, heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and passenger service vehicles (PSVs) are doing so illegally, or to an inadequate standard.

Transaid, it’s in-country partners, and it’s transport industry supporters have developed the Professional Driver Training Project (PDTP) which targets the passenger and freight transport sectors, building capacity within host countries to ensure that driving standards are improved, as well as advocating for legislation endorsing these improved standards through mandatory training.

It is through our in-country partners that the PDTP aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To develop, test and confirm appropriate national driver training standards
- To significantly contribute to satisfying the professional driver training requirements of the transport industry
- To be recognised as the premier professional driver training centre within the country and the region
- For the training centre to achieve financial stability and sustainability

3. Measuring the Impact of Road Safety Interventions

The risk factors that contribute to road deaths and injuries are varied and establishing to what degree these factors influence the number of road deaths is a challenge. Unreliable or inconsistent crash data is an obvious hindrance to monitoring impact as is a fragmented approach to road safety governance where it is unclear who actually owns the issue and enforcement is inconsistent. These factors present a context where there has been little appetite for monitoring the effectiveness of road safety interventions.

It is assumed that a programme of structured training followed by a test of competence contributes to reduced road crash fatalities however, quantifying this is difficult. Whilst the PDTP manages some of the risk factors contributing to road traffic death and injury (i.e. user behaviour, vehicle safety), isolating the direct impact of this intervention is a long term aim.

Some of the PDTP’s key achievements:

Transaid’s PDTP has made significant progress in raising professional driver training standards.

- We have long term partnerships in place with the Industrial Training Centre (ITC) in Zambia, and the National Institute of Transport (NIT) in Tanzania, and we work closely with the Ugandan Ministry of Works and Transport.
- The ITC is now recognised as Zambia’s primary training institution for drivers of heavy goods vehicles.
- A PSV driver training curriculum developed in conjunction with NIT, has been adopted nationally in Tanzania, with the same planned for the HGV curriculum.
- Class sizes at NIT have been reduced by 75% thereby improving the quality of training received.
- Over 600 HGV drivers are trained to standards set by Transaid and the ITC annually in Zambia.
- Approximately 3000 PSV drivers are trained to standards set by Transaid and the NIT each year.
- Transaid and the NIT have designed a new standardised driving test which is awaiting government approval.
- Transaid, the ITC and the NIT have developed a curriculum for motorcycle taxi riders for adoption in Tanzania.
- Transaid and the NIT are presently developing a training curriculum for drivers of large commercial vehicles due to be adopted by all five East Africa Community member states.