

Article (5 minute read)

## **Professional Driver Training – Uganda project: *Leveraging the private sector's support in reducing road traffic fatalities and saving lives in Uganda***

Based on data gathered in 2016, the World Health Organisation's Global Status Report on Road Safety (2018)<sup>1</sup> reported an estimated 1.35 million deaths on our roads, with a significant number of people also suffering injury and/or disability. As we move into the UN's second Decade of Action against Road Safety (2021-2030), these figures continue to present a significant burden for public health services in low income countries where the majority of fatalities and injuries occur.

In Uganda, the WHO (2018)<sup>2</sup> estimated that over 12,000 lives are lost as a result of road traffic incidents annually and, taking into account the intra- and inter-regional carriage of goods and people (road transport accounts for over 95% of cargo freight and passenger movement in Uganda<sup>3</sup>), the transport industry has a key role to play in reducing casualty rates in countries like Uganda.

The effective management of road safety offers efficiencies to the transport sector, which is already a key driver of economic growth through facilitating domestic and international trade as well as contributing to national integration and providing access to essential services such as education, employment and healthcare. Therefore there is every incentive for private and public sector transporters to invest in addressing this global health crisis.

In a context where a growth in activity within the oil and gas sector is leading to a significant increase in heavy goods traffic on Uganda's roads<sup>4</sup>, Transaid, with its partner Safe Way Right Way (a Ugandan road safety NGO), implemented the Professional Driver Training – Uganda (PDT-U) project between 2016 and 2020.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565684>

<sup>2</sup> WHO, 2018. Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018. WHO.

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<https://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/2.3+Uganda+Road+Network#:~:text=The%20road%20transport%20is%20by,of%20the%20total%20road%20traffic.>

<sup>4</sup> Mott MacDonald (2015) Capacity Needs Analysis for Oil and Gas Sector Skills in Uganda: Final Demand and Supply Assessment Report.

The PDT-U project responded to reports from many of the transporters in this sector linked to the challenges in recruiting appropriately skilled, safe Ugandan professional drivers, and delivers a sustainable solution to meeting future demand for Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) and Passenger Service Vehicle (PSV) driver training. It used as its minimum standard, the *East African Commission (EAC) Standardised Curriculum for Drivers of Large Commercial Vehicles (passenger and freight)* which Transaid developed on behalf of the EAC secretariat in 2015, and is due to be rolled out to all EAC member states<sup>5</sup>.

Key to the PDT-U's long term success is private sector buy-in. To achieve this, the training has to be relevant to the industry's needs, therefore exhaustive consultation with transporters took place and training materials were adapted where necessary, prior to the upskilling of Ugandan driver trainers. In return, the larger international transporters would then switch from importing driver training expertise from outside of the country, to utilising the project's Ugandan trainers.

The project team are rightly proud of what the PDT-U project has achieved over the last four years. There are now 17 Ugandan trainers, representing 11 different training schools able to deliver HGV and PSV training to the standards defined by the EAC curriculum. These trainers are now considered to be amongst the most skilled and qualified trainers in the region to deliver up-to-standard professional driver training, and on more than occasion have delivered training to trainers in other countries such as Ethiopia. Training new trainers as and when demand requires it, is carried out by Ugandan *master trainers* and means there will be a reduced dependence on external support in the future.



*Fig 1. Training of trainers and master trainers on the Professional Driver Training – Uganda project.*

A new specialist HGV and PSV training school has been set up in Mukono, located to the east of Kampala, to add to existing training capacity ahead of the anticipated increase in demand for drivers. This school has been providing new licence acquisition and refresher training to drivers since June 2018 and has so far delivered training to over 340 drivers, the majority of which was for new licence acquisition. In total, more than 711 drivers have been trained and this is despite delays to oil and gas activities in western Uganda.

*“The new drivers that went through the training are already giving tips to the other more experienced drivers – they are better than our most experienced drivers.”*

*Eric Mbaalya (Transport Manager – Mukasa Couriers Limited)*

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<sup>5</sup> Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Finally, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda has been supportive of the adoption of the adapted EAC training materials and is currently taking steps to mandate these standards for all drivers recruited by the oil and gas sector. This move confirms that the materials developed are relevant to the sector, and instituting the materials as the mandatory minimum standard for the sector is the first step towards full adoption whereby all professional drivers will require this training.



*Fig 2. New licence acquisition training taking place (pre COVID-19) at the PDT-U specialist training centre in Mukono.*

In parallel, we have been working to ascertain the long term impact of the training that is delivered, as well as trying to establish a link between this training and safer driver behaviour on Uganda's roads. Given the lack of quality and reliable road safety data in the region, as well as across the continent, monitoring long term impact requires willingness and cooperation on the part of the private sector. As such, we seek private sector transporters to partner with Transaid both in terms of their commitment to bringing their drivers through the improved training, and in sharing driver data to establish long term trends over a number of years.

This process is already underway having gained a strong understanding of the challenges that the industry experiences in releasing its drivers for training, further exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, this understanding is helping us design a realistic monitoring, evaluation and learning programme which is fit for purpose, and will in future years, determine what impact quality driver training programmes have on reducing the number of fatalities and injuries on Uganda's roads. Early indications are positive.

*"It's been a game changer not only for the drivers but for how we manage the entire operation. We're seeing less over-speeding and harsh braking by our drivers which translates to a greater integrity of the asset [the vehicle fleet] and definite reputational improvements. Things that we took for granted have changed after the training and have contributed to a lot of reductions in running costs."*

*Hussein Kiddedde (CEO — Graben 4PL)*

An independent evaluation of the project showed that the training had met or exceeded the expectations of 99% of trainees, with 100% stating that the knowledge acquired during the training had equipped them with the relevant skills needed to enter the job market. Importantly, bearing in mind the overarching aim of improving safe driver behaviour, over 90% of drivers perceived themselves to be safer drivers as a result of the training.

Transformative change does not occur in isolation. The appetite shown by many of our private sector partners has been essential to the achievements that the PDT-U project has made. While Uganda is now in a better place compared to other East African states ahead of the adoption of the EAC standardised curriculum, there is still work to do in contributing to ensuring the region's roads are safer. Transaid will continue to work towards building an evidence base linked to the impact of improved driver training, and towards scaling this initiative to ensure that the region is prepared for the adoption of harmonised driver training standards, and ultimately also that Africa's roads are safer for all road users.