



Empowered Drivers, Safer Roads

COVID19 TRUCK DRIVERS COMMUNITY LED INTERVENTION PROGRAM REPORT 2020

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Drivers participating in COVID 19 awareness during field sensitization by Chairperson ULDHTDA at Elegu Border Point

1. Background

From 1st April, 2020; Truck drivers were highly affected by COVID19 during the height of the pandemic in 2020. This was as a result of Government considering continued operations of goods vehicles amidst the lockdown, of course with restrictions (SOPs). As of 4th June, 2020 out of the 557 positive cases, 350 were truck drivers, reported by New Vision E-Paper- journalist Faridah Kulabako.

Ugandan truck drivers went through rough times to continue working as essential workers due to high level of stigma and hate attacks, poor case management, gaps in risk communication, welfare challenges resulting from restricted operations and delay in COVID19 testing results including having to pay for the test, poor case management, ART adherence for those who were on HIV treatment due to distortion of service delivery points and where truckers were allowed to park, job loss and psychological stress resulting from limited understanding of C19 among those who tested positive and were isolated including those quarantined.

Although the Government of Uganda, national response to COVID19 had done well to minimise community transmission of COVID 19 through the country lockdown and enforcement of social distancing, risk communication to the general population, targeted testing including of trucker drivers at border points designation of seclusion centres for truck drivers in transit, surveillance and case management

among others, there has been notable gaps to the response to COVID 19 infections among the trucker drivers community given the mobility of truckers, limited engagement of truckers by government COVID 19 frontline actors and **limited understanding of the issues affecting trucker drivers community**. This resulted in lack of targeted messages to truckers and communities along the transport corridors, violation of truckers rights along the COVID 19 testing, surveillance /tracking and isolation/ treatment cascade. This contributed to occasional disappearance of drivers after COVID 19 testing and challenges in tracking them, non-compliance with and enforcement of standard operating procedures at the truck drivers seclusion centres and stigmatization of trucker drivers by communities.

Uganda Professional Drivers Network (UPDN) being the umbrella body for drivers in the country has found it absolutely necessary to develop a truck-drivers community - led strategy to support the government initiatives to fight the COVID 19 pandemic. **The overall aim of the strategy was to ensure ownership of the COVID 19 response through active involvement of their community**. Specific aims of the strategy were to ensure that i) truck drivers receive appropriate COVID 19 prevention messages that empower them take responsibility for their own health and protect their families and communities ii) truck drivers appreciate their responsibility to comply with treatment and other preventive measures of COVID 19 positive iii) truckers are treated with dignity along the testing and isolation/treatment cascade **iii) truck drivers welfare issues are addressed while in quarantine or treatment centres**.

COVID 19 Structure

In consultation with its truck drivers' member associations, Uganda Professional Drivers Network has established a 25 member truck drivers'/sex worker's community led task force to spearhead the truck drivers community led strategy to stem COVID 19 infections among trucker drivers and **to ensure welfare issues of trucker drivers are addressed while in transit, quarantine and treatment centres**. This structure shall be supported by a team of 100 truckers' peers spread across Uganda to offer peer counseling and psychosocial support at designated stop over points and 5 major boarder entries. It is also important to note that this structure has obtained official Ministry of Health Clearance for these planned National response complementary roles.

The major objective of the community led elected structure is to complement COVID19 National response measures through;

- a. Information development and dissemination
- b. Resource Mobilisation
- c. Partnership engagement
- d. Quality assurance in the implementation of current measures targeting truck drivers
- e. Community Surveillance
- f. **Welfare support to truck drivers and their families**

The strategy is a peer driver approach premised on the fact that drivers are in better position to understand their fellow drivers. The strategy is based on data from

border point testing centres for trucker drivers the analysis of the government initiatives in regard to the response to the increasing COVID 19 infections among truck drivers .

DOMAIN	CHALLENGES/GAPS	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBILITY
COVID-19 RISK COMMUNICATION TARGETING TRUCKERS AND SEX-WORKERS	Communication in language trucker drivers hardly understand	Have tailored Truckers messages translated into Swahili, Luganda, etc	MoH, MoWT, UPDN, NLP, USAID/CHC
	Truckers have limited access to conventional media	Utilise the UPDN database of 4000 truck drivers to disseminate COVID 19 prevention, education and information messages using WhatsApp, Animations, recorded voices and videos, etc	UPDN, MoH, NLP
	No mechanism in place at current seclusion centres for continuous risk mitigation	Utilise truckers peers by establishing community information desks at boarder points and designated seclusion centres Develop SOPs for the seclusion centres	MoH, MoWT, UPDN. NLP
	Limited evidence-based response mechanisms	Facilitate UPDN structure to perform rapid assessment for data to inform evidence base	MoH, UPDN, NLP
SURVEILLANCE OF TRUCKERS	Truckers still carrying passengers	Involve truckers representatives at boarder points to manage Journey Management plan for truckers in transit	MoH, MoWT, UPDN, NLP
	No mechanism to monitor adherence to current guidelines	Utilise Journey Management Plan and proposed community led surveillance support centres for checks and coordination	MoWT, UPDN, NLP UPDN, CDC
	No feedback and support mechanism for Drivers should their trucks get a mechanical breakdown en-route the seclusion centre	Avail drivers with a Directory Avail a hot line to be managed by the UPDN	
COORDINATION OF TRUCKERS	Truck drivers not involved in National Response	Utilise the Truck drivers COVID19 National Response taskforce under UPDN	MoH, MoWT, UPDN. NLP
	Poor coordination between tested truckers awaiting results being tracked and tracking team, especially those who test positive for COVID19	Involve proposed Truckers structure to support professional retrieving of positive drivers	MoH, MoWT, UPDN
	Seclusion centres mixing local truckers and those on transit	Separate local truckers from those on transit	MoH, MoWT, UPDN, NLP

	Current seclusion centres lack provision for access to basic facilities for hygiene, essential services like drugs, food, money services, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop SOPs for the designated places Support UPDN structures /trucker peers to coordinate access to essential services 	MoH, MoWT, UPDN, NLP, TRANSAID
	Limited evidence-based response mechanism	Facilitate UPDN structure to perform rapid assessment for data to inform evidence based	MoH, MoWT, UPDN, Sex workers led organisations
	Lack of welfare support for truck drivers while in quarantine and treatment centres	Mobilise food and other basic support to the families of drivers	UPDN, NLP



We engaged Border Authority at Elegu that ended the strike at the Boarder due to welfare issues that resulted from COVID19 guidelines



Community led task force after a planning meeting at the UPDN Secretariat

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TDA,

HTU, NLDTA,RLDTA), Driver Training Schools (GLA,UDSA, SWRW and Prestige Driving School), Sex workers led organisations (LMB) founded a community led response task force to support collaboration with stakeholders like NLP, MoH, MoGLSD, CDC, Transaid, FHI 360, MoWT and The National COVID19 response task force.

In August,2020, Uganda Professional Drivers Network signed a services contract with Transaid World Wide Services Limited for the distribution of Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs) at 5 Border points in Uganda namely; Elegu in Amuru District, Pakwach in Pakwach District, Kampala in Kampala City, Mutukula in Rakai District and Lukaya in Kalungu District. <https://kmaupdates.com/uganda-an-initiative-to-protect-truck-drivers-from-coronavirus-has-been-set-up/>



(Mutukula) Hakizimana Alphonse cleaning his Covid risk driver area after being sensitized



(Pakwach) Our field officer at work

It is important to note that the above project was implemented along Truck Drivers' Associations, SWRW that provided training for the project team, did procurement for the items and performed project supervision; while ATGWU handled PPE distribution at Malaba and Busia while SWRW did Kampala.

By 2nd November, 2020 up to 764 had tested positive as reported by MoH Facebook page, with over 1,000 having gone through quarantine at different facilities across Uganda. No death was reported among truckers in the first wave. The truck drivers, went through several challenges.

3. Key issues at the time/Challenges

- Direct stigma and hate attacks targeting truck drivers as media made it appear as if the truck drivers were the ones spreading the infections
- Delayed return of Covid-19 results which affected timely delivery of commodities to destination points and crowding at the boarder points
- Trucker drivers continued engaging FSWs making it hard to minimize re-infections,
- Truck drivers who tested COVID19 positive running away into the community after being declared to be positive and Government was not able to have timely information of their last location and contacts
- Psychological stress from truckers who were declared positive and taken into isolation resulting from ability to understand COVID19, loss of jobs as their bosses would take away the trucks, etc

- Delayed recovery among the isolated truck drivers and reported high number of truckers recorded high blood pressure resulting from stress, anxiety and confusion
- Limited targeted information on COVID19 prevention, treatment and care that resulted to demonstrations by those in isolation and quarantine
- Lack of community involvement for pre and post test counselling, surveillance and case management that resulted into hostility from the truckers community
- Distorted service delivery models for existing HIV programs as outreaches, former service delivery points were affected by the guidelines for operations of truckers during COVID19 pandemic
- Designated areas for truckers at the time, due to abrupt restrictions services as sanitary facilities, basic needs and services were a big challenge including the increased number of truckers at border points
- Truckers were not included among communities to access the safeguards provided for many other communities like food and other basic requirements
- Diversion from agreed routes by the truck drivers
- Several truck drivers were reportedly carrying random passengers, as a result of ban on public and private transport
- High cost of test fees given the directive that truckers pay for their tests including condition of re-test after every 14 days
- 413 truck drivers, were documented by UPDN to have lost jobs as a result of being admitted at the hospital after testing positive and owners of trucks withdrawing, their bosses failing to pay charges as test fees, etc

4. Planned outcome/WORKPLAN

Activity	Output	Timeframe in weeks (1 st May -30 th July 2020)													Responsibility
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Risk Communication															
Development of COVID 19 messages	Messages in Swahili and Luganda developed													UPDN & PARTNERS (MOH, CHC/USAID)	
Dissemination of approved messages to truckers	Messages sent to 5,000 truck drivers on weekly basis and assorted IEC materials targeting communities along the transport corridor													UPDN & PARTNERS (MoH, NLP)	
Establish peer - led community information desks at boarder points and designated seclusion centres	20 information desks established and facilitated													UPDN & PARTNERS (NLP, Transaid)	
Conduct rapid assessment for data to inform evidence based response	1 rapid assessment conducted													UPDN& PARTNERS (MoH, CDC)	

Surveillance														
Lobby for Involvement of truckers representatives at boarder points to manage Journey Management plan for truckers in transit	Truckers represented atleast at 5 major border points													UPDN
Establish a hot line to be managed by the truckers	Hot line established for coordination with truckers													UPDN, NLP
Coordination														
Lobby for representation of Truck drivers COVID19 National Response taskforce	Atleast 2 truck drivers representatives the committees on risk communication & surveillance													UPDN
Lobby for separation of local truckers from those on transit	Separate local truckers designated													UPDN
Support coordination of access to essential services	SOPs for seclusion points established													UPDN & PARTNERS (MoH, Transaid)
Welfare support to Covid 19 positive drivers and their families	At least 1800 truckers families assisted with food aid and other COVID 19 prevention supplies													UPDN & PARTNERS (Global Fund, OPM)
Conduct rapid assessment for data to inform evidence base for effective coordination	1 assessment conducted on SOPs and human rights compliance													UPDN & PARTNERS (NLP)
Provide internet data and airtime for coordination of task force meetings	Effective communication support of 25 task force members													UPDN & PARTNERS, NLP

5. Key Achievements

The community led initiative, enabled us to;

- The team headed by the PRO, Byron Kinene appeared on several radio and T,V stations participated in reaching 26,719 truckers and over 1 million stakeholders across Uganda
- Using the different Truckers Associations and UPDN social media platforms, the team reached over 16,000 truckers with BCCM
- We supported the National response task force (MOH) recover 37 truckers who had been lost to referral by tracing from their other contacts. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/7-truck-drivers-with-covid-19-disappear-in-city-suburb-1891698>
- We worked with MOH in offering the then much needed psycho-social support to those who were in isolation and quarantine centers. We for example helped

in preparing the hostile drivers at isolation centers to meet the MOH team for rapid assessment aimed at identifying source of infections for truckers.

- The team also jointly worked with MOH and NLP in development and dissemination of behavioral change communication using different media houses and platforms across Uganda including videos aimed at reducing stigma targeting truckers



The community led task force representative-E.D UPDN appearing in a press statement with NLP

Jur own Ssekaja



"Protect yourself, keep a physical distance, wear a face mask and wash your hands regularly. Corona is real" Abdullah says.



In partnership with MoH, we developed messaging to fight stigma against truckers

- We reached over 17,000 truck drivers with Behavioral Change communication, peer to peer sensitisation and offer of PPEs (reusable face masks, washing soap, water containers-jerrycans) to 5000 truckers, including car stickers with COVID19 behavioral change communication with in kind PPE support from Transaid



Sample truck driver specific COVID19 car stickers which were put on trucks of sensitised drivers



Chairperson RLDTA among Associations which volunteered to sensitise truckers and giving out MOTA ENGIL masks

- Attracted support of 2,000 medical face masks from MOTA ENGIL Uganda that complemented the above support
- Through TASO, we mobilised and offered cash nutritional support of UGX 180,000 to 156 truck drivers who were HIV positive and were economically affected by COVID19; either by job loss, joblessness or delayed stay at isolation or quarantine centers
- Successfully advocated for official recognition as partner of Ministry of Health including absorption of community representatives into Government National COVID19 response task force committees as POE National Sub-committee, Surveillance and risk communication
- PPEs Distributions were successfully carried out in all the 4 project locations as follows;

LOCATIONS	JERICANS	FACE MASK	SOAP	Stickers
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Lukaya	400 Pieces	400 Pieces	20 boxes (100 Bars)	150(English), 150(Kiswahili), 100(Luganda)
Mutukula	400 Pieces	400 Pieces	20 boxes (100 Bars)	100(English), 150(Kiswahili), 100(Luganda) 50 (French)
Pakwach	800 Pieces	800 Pieces	40 boxes (200 Bars)	250(English), 375(Kiswahili), 125(Luganda) 50(French)
Elegu	800 Pieces	800 Pieces	40 boxes (200 Bars)	300(English), 375(Kiswahili), 125(Luganda)
Kampala		3500 Pieces	2,000 from MOTA ENGIL and 1,500 from MARPI. They were mainly given through Truckers' Associations and related training schools	



A truck pictured at Kireka Kampala heading towards Jinja, bearing the car stickers which were mainly distributed at major boarder points



The jerrycans give to the truckers to support them carry water for regular clean up of their trucks and emergencies also were branded with prevention information

It is important to note that; with the community involvement, by November 2020 infections among truck drivers in Uganda lowered to below three and later zero

6. Success Stories

1. Eunice Ndugere is a truck driver from Nairobi-Kenya and currently working for Hima Cement in Uganda. "I have been driving for 19 years now and Covid 19 has been one of my test time in truck driving. I received a mask, a jerican, a sticker and a bar of soap at Pakwach from UPDN on my way to Tororo. The

mask I got is very good and nice since I can easily wash and re-use it unlike the disposable mask I have been using. The most important item is the jerrican that I only do not use it for washing my hands but have started treating my water in this Jerican with Safeguard tablets for my drinking. She said. " One day during lock down, I travelled from Tororo to Moyo in Uganda without drinking any water since the community kept chasing me away from stopping since they claimed truck drivers were infecting people with Covid-19. I decided to stop and take dirty swamp water along Moyo road since I was too thirsty to keep on. The truck is now my bathroom, bedroom and kitchen since I move alone and we are not allowed to carry turn men as a COVID 19 measure. Besides, a lady like me need much water and this jerrican is helping me a lot to carry water " Imagine travelling from Tororo to Bunagana is 700km and you only stop in the bush to rest and cook something which need water. I make sure I always wear my mask everytime I get out of my truck and my advice to my fellow drivers are; to observe health guidelines, wash hands, wear clean mask and keep social distance.

(This was a follow up interview conducted by Denis-UPDN Program Officer on the impact of PPEs to drivers)



Eunice getting her PPEs from a UPDN field officer in Pakwach



Zilabbamuzale
Ronald.mp4

Zilabbamuzale Ronald is a Tanzanian Truck driver who has appreciated the efforts of UPDN to ensure drivers are supported on Covid 19 response. He admitted that the Jerican will help him keep water hence keeping cleanliness. " The mask given to me will help me protect myself from possible Covid19 infection from others" he said. He continued saying that he had insecurity especially at home where his family always want him to first bath and change cloth before reaching home. He says " I am not freely accepted at home and my cloths are kept outside for fear of Covid 19 infections" For now he is sure he can routinely wash his clothings by stocking water since there is much delay at the border while waiting for Covid 19 test results.



Zilabbamuzale Ronald after receiving his PPE from Mutukula border post

7. Appendices

7a. Abbreviations

1. MoWT Ministry of Works and Transport
2. NLP National Logistics Platform
3. RLDTA Regional Lorry Drivers and Transporters' Association
4. NLDTA National Lorry Drivers and Transporters' Association
5. ULDTA Uganda Long Distance and Heavy Trucks Drivers' Association
6. PSFU Private Sector Foundation Uganda
7. GLA Graben Logistics Academy
8. UDSA Uganda Driving Standards Agency
9. SWRW Safe Way Right Way
10. IEC Information, Education and Communication
11. COVID19 Corona virus 2019

7b. References

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8. Logos of Partners



Amalgamated Transport and
General Workers' Union

