

South Africa

URSA



In South Africa and in the neighboring countries of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, thousands of truck drivers traverse the highway corridors each day. Workers in the truck driving industry are often away from their homes, families and social environments for extended periods of time, and are therefore prone to engage in risky sexual behavior. As they have limited access to proper health care while en route, truck drivers are quite vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB). Targeting truck drivers, community members near truck stops, and commercial sex workers has been one of the key strategies of a University Research South Africa (URSA) initiative under the Stop TB Partnership-WHO's TB REACH Wave 3 grant.

In November 2013, the big truck stop in Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa was used by URSA and Trucking Wellness to launch the TB REACH Project of Intensifying TB Case Detection in Transportation Industry. The Umtata truck stop is among the busiest in South Africa, and the commitment of the Department of Health to expand health care services in High Transmission Areas for HIV/AIDS enhanced this opportunity to integrate TB case-finding at the truck stops. TB screening and collection of sputum has not previously been conducted by the Roadside Wellness Centres supported by Trucking Wellness.

The Intensifying TB Case Detection in Transportation Industry project has three objectives: (1) Improve TB detection and access to treatment for truck drivers, Commercial Sex Workers and communities near truck stops, (2) Build Trucking Wellness capacity to provide optimal TB prevention, care and management to mobile and vulnerable populations, and (3) Use mobile technology to improve diagnosis, early treatment, follow-up and adherence of TB patients in the trucking industry.

Stop TB Partnership
TB REACH

The project launch was followed by an outreach campaign at the truck stop. The Trucking Wellness Roadside Wellness Centre was used for screening, counselling and testing 12 truck drivers who were screened for TB and tested for HIV.

Launch of the TB REACH Project brought together the private sector (especially those working in transportation), members of the community residing near the truck stop in Umtata, the Department of Health, political leaders, community leaders, and key stakeholders working with Most at Risk Populations (MARPS). The launch was thus focused on strengthening collaboration amongst public, private and civil society sectors in order to expand TB and HIV services for mobile populations including prevention, care and treatment programs and linkages to social support.

As a result of this project, stakeholder engagement is emerging in the private sector, especially regarding transport, resulting in a commitment to ensure that TB is part of the Health and Wellness program. Advocacy, communication, and social mobilization (ACSM) dialogues have been initiated among the transportation sector, the Department of Health and local communities on TB and TB/HIV workplace activities. And importantly, outreach to truck drivers and communities near truck stops, including commercial sex workers, has been initiated in the form of TB screening, HIV testing and improving access to treatment.