



## **RIDERS FOR HEALTH**

The background

### **The need**

Public health, vital life saving resources and other health care measures must reach the people who need them if lives are to be saved in Africa. This statement may seem self-evident and yet, for millions of people across Africa, help in terms of vaccines and public health expertise is simply and frustratingly just out of reach. The barriers are basic ones: distance, terrain, poverty and lack of transport.

### **Riders' vision and mission**

Vision: a world in which no one dies of an easily preventable or curable disease because they cannot be reached due to barriers of distance, terrain or poverty.

Mission: to strengthen health systems in global health by running and managing vehicle fleets and, in doing so, partnering and supporting those who deliver health care in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Transport**

Motorcycles and four-wheeled vehicles are the missing link in the health care supply chain. From health education and other public health measures to the timely and effective delivery of medical interventions – all are dependent on predictable, reliable transport and, more specifically, transport that is managed for predictability and cost-effectiveness. This is the most neglected and yet the most vital aspect of a health system. A vehicle must do its job consistently and reliably for all other health interventions to have their intended impact. The consequence of not having predictable transportation in an already harsh environment can be deadly.

### **Focus**

Riders has developed a core competence to support the work of partners whose job it is to improve the health of rural communities – ministries of health and other health care agencies. Riders has designed, stress tested and costed an appropriate infrastructure and management system in which to manage vehicles used in the harshest of conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. The system is sustainable and replicable and capable of operating on a very large scale.

### **Costs and budgets**

The management of transport is a piece of the health systems puzzle that is consistently overlooked. And yet, the capital and running costs of the number of vehicles needed to serve the whole continent is huge and it must be better-used. Riders and their partners can calculate, as result of Riders' work, the precise cost of each kilometre travelled. Budgets, over a five year period (life of the vehicle) are produced and this brings with it accountability and transparency. Corruption-proofing and management disciplines are automatically in place with the Riders system.

### **Replication and scale**

Each aspect of the system is designed, with allowances for local or country differences, to be replicated on a national scale. It is all very well having an inspired or dedicated individual management of vehicles in one area or in one NGO but Riders has made replicable models so that replication can be systematic and independent of individual commitment or characteristics.

### **Sustainability**

Each programme must be managed and staffed by people of the countries in which the programmes operate. Unless this were the case, the systems would have a finite life and that life would be constantly disrupted by the comings and goings of expatriate staff. Building technical capacity as well as systematic management behaviours is all part of creating sustainable national infrastructure. Riders therefore pays close attention to meeting standards of excellence and the replicability of its training and systems models. And building this capacity in Africa brings with it employment and technical and management skills.

### **Advocacy**

Riders has worked, and continues to work as a key priority, to make transport for health care delivery in Africa highly visible so that it can ultimately return to its rightful place of invisible predictability.

Transport management for the delivery of health care in Africa is one of the most vital yet most neglected aspects of development. This costly neglect may stem from the fact that people in the developed world take transport and logistics so much for granted that it is almost invisible. They are part of the inalienable rights of the developed world. It is also the case that few people in the development community have a knowledge of the internal combustion engine or fleet management and logistics. Development is often focused at an academic, scientific, and economic level and there may be a view that transport does not fit in the global health arena or that it is not part of health systems. However, Riders' work has proved that the improvements in health delivery are severely ill-fated if this is not addressed.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Riders has devised and monitored initial metrics to show how transport impacts health systems. Measuring and assessing the impact of Riders for Health's work is of vital importance. Riders' M&E has begun to address the key questions of 'What part does transport play in strengthening health systems?' and 'How relevant is it to improving the health of Africa?'

Riders' resources have been limited to 'proof of concept' and 'delivering the goods' but has recognised that a focus on monitoring and evaluation is more vital than ever at this stage.

### **Historical overview 1996-2008**

The founders of Riders for Health, Barry and Andrea Coleman saw the problems caused by lack of transport in Africa and believed they could bring about a change. As individuals they have had to take risks in order to enable Riders' teams to establish the successful programmes in The Gambia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Lesotho and Kenya.

Barry and Andrea also knew that funding for this issue was not going to be easy to access. They built a constituency of people from the motorcycle community by creating 'money can't buy' and fun events. With this funding they proved their concept of establishing a vehicle maintenance infrastructure.

Riders is now firmly established as a social enterprise. Riders' programmes earn money from the services provided to organisations in the countries in which Riders operate and that need vehicles for health care delivery in rural Africa. Riders continues to raise money from the motorcycle community and now more widely.

Riders employs over 200 people in Africa and runs more than 1000 vehicles, enabling health workers to reach more than 10 million people in rural Africa – most of whom had never seen a health worker before the mobility changed health care outreach capacity.

Riders has eighteen staff in the UK. Three of whom are field staff based in the UK. They are from Nigeria, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.