



United Nations Development Programme
South East Asia HIV and Development Project

LAND TRANSPORT & HIV VULNERABILITY A development challenge



UNESCAP



UNDP

UNOPS

HIV/AIDS is not just a public health concern in the Greater Mekong Subregion. The epidemic threatens to reverse decades of development. It strikes hardest the countries least able to resist. The huge economic cost might be easier to bear if the disease did not have an even greater human cost. The incidence of HIV/AIDS continues to worsen and no industry remains untouched by the disease.

The land transport sector is no exception. Workers in this industry can be especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, but are often excluded or simply missed in many prevention or care programs. The transport sector has unique potential to contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission. Many of the situations in which HIV spreads can be changed through strategies and policies of the transport sector.

Forward planning can reduce the number of people infected, and help ensure that everyone is prepared for challenges that will arise from widespread illness and death. Planning and creative problem solving can also lead to new modes of cooperation within this sector, enabling economic survival in places most severely impacted by the HIV epidemic.

WHY is HIV/AIDS an issue for the land transport sector?

- More transport means more people travel, and HIV can spread further and faster. Transport can connect areas of high and low prevalence. Building of transport and other infrastructure often involves mobility of construction workers, engineers and communities. This brings people into situations which increase their vulnerability to HIV transmission.
- The effectiveness and reliability of transport could become compromised and lead to a decline in productivity if HIV becomes common amongst people in the sector. If productivity decreases in the land transport sector, then the rest of the economy will also be adversely affected. This could exacerbate the problems of the HIV epidemic as it is becoming epidemic in the region.

However, the negative impacts can be minimised by ensuring HIV/AIDS is considered when planning land transport activities. The land transport sector, as one of the largest and most influential groups in the region, can play a very significant role in the prevention of the epidemic in the region.

Copy right of the United Nations Development Programme. All rights reserved. This publication may be quoted, reproduced or translated, in part or in full, provided the source is acknowledged. It may not be reproduced for any commercial use without the prior written approval of the UNDP.

Website: www.hiv-development.org

Contact information: seahiv@undp.org

Photograph by: Royalty free/CORBIS

National Library of Thailand catalogue in publication ISBN: 974-680-186-4

WHO should be involved?

The land transport sector includes all those involved in, or affected by, the transport of goods, services and people. It includes:

- Government policy makers: staff of ministries of transport, local governments who make decisions about where roads will be placed, what types of activities will take place, what taxing systems will be used, etc;
- The private sector, including large organisations with regional networks; small owner operators of trucks, hotels, restaurants, fuel stations, parking, warehousing facilities and repair shops;
- The people who work in land transport and associated industries; and
- The people who live in places connected by transport routes, including people who have always lived in such places as well as people who have more recently found that their lives are connected with others through improvements in land transport.

WHAT needs to be done?

Change People's Behaviour

HIV is mostly spread through sexual intercourse without condoms, and through sharing of injecting equipment when people are using drugs: medical or social drugs or through contaminated blood. So one way to reduce HIV transmission is to ensure people change these behaviours.

People can be encouraged to use condoms for sex, or to use clean injecting equipment, however ultimately, it is up to the individual. These behaviours require ongoing commitment of the individual as well as a supportive environment. Programs used to promote changes must be clear about their reasons for doing so by providing information about HIV/AIDS, how it is spread and what can be done to prevent transmission. Some factors that enable change include access to information, social support and resources such as condoms, STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) treatment services and clean injecting equipment”.

Change the Conditions that Affect People's Behaviour

People in some settings are much more likely to engage in commercial sex, drug use and selling blood, than people in other settings. So another way to reduce HIV transmission is to provide safe alternatives for people engaged in drug use and selling blood and ensure safe sexual behavior. This might involve:

“Reaching mobile populations is difficult for a variety of reasons, because they move quite often from one place to another. The missed opportunities to address this vulnerability may lead to a high HIV transmission in society, including amongst spouses” (H.E. Dr Bounkhouang Phichith, Vice-Minister of Health, Lao PDR)

- *Creating enabling environments in specific locations:* environments that enable people to avoid risky sex or harmful drug use. For example, providing free condoms in brothels.
- *Changing the ways people travel:* for example, men who travel alone are more likely to engage in sex than men who travel with their wives and families.
- *Changing the policies and regulations* that influence people's vulnerability to behaviours that enable HIV transmission. For example, reduce the length of time trucks have to stop at borders or at destination points.
- *Knowledge:* provide information in several languages other than the local language.
- *Increase resources for preventing transmission of HIV:* HIV can affect the highest level managers the same way as the lowest level staff. Some people who travel are less likely to have access to condoms, clean injecting equipment, and health services than people who do not travel, not just for financial reasons but also because they don't know how to access these resources away from home.

HOW can the land transport sector help?

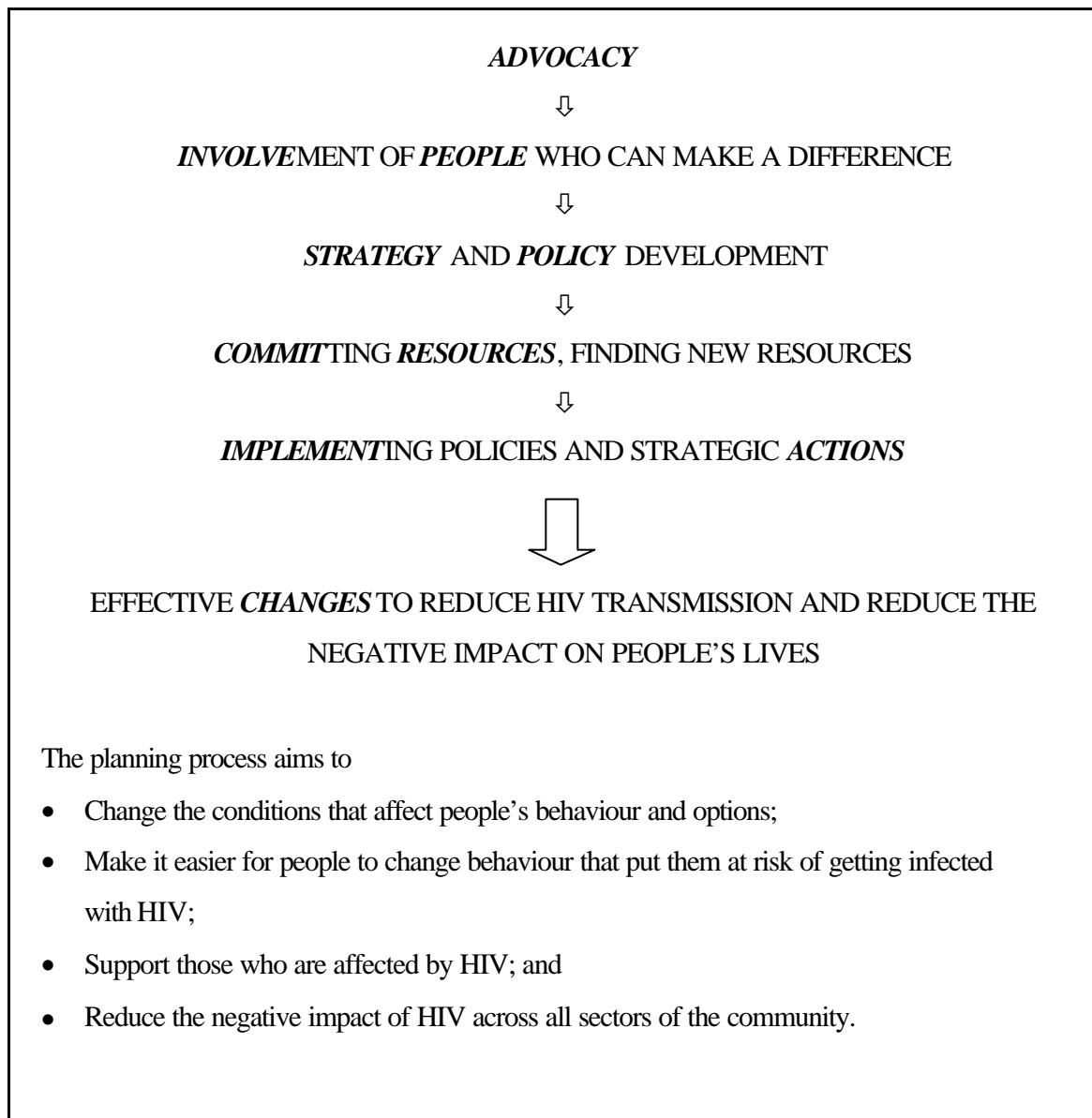
Successful HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs for mobile populations tend to be those developed with and guided by those affected and involving substantial community mobilisation. Programs must ensure access to care and be integrated with other local and national AIDS-related programs. The land transport sector can make a difference.

- Improved land transport connections can make it easier for people to learn about HIV and to gain access to health services including STI treatment and HIV testing and counselling (HIV spreads most rapidly when people already have untreated STIs, and when absence of voluntary testing services means few people know they have HIV).
- Improved land transport connections can make it easier for people to support one another in changing the behaviours which spread HIV. Families can stay in contact, people can return home more often to spend time with their spouses, and teenagers can travel to work and come home more frequently.
- Improved land transport connections can improve people's access to education, and this can lead to better jobs and more sustainable long term incomes for individuals and families.
- Improved land transport connections can help people better understand what is occurring for people in other places. This can make the HIV epidemic more visible and thus make it more likely that people will find ways to respond to it.

“What is the use of building roads and bridges if we do not prevent HIV? If more of our people die of AIDS, soon there would be no-one left to use them”. (A Minister in Asia, stated at the 5th ICAAP conference in Kuala Lumpur, October 1999).

- Improved land transport connections make it easier to share lessons learned about what works in slowing the spread of the HIV epidemic, and in addressing its social and economic impact.

The planning process recommended by UNDP, UNAIDS and UNESCAP for the transport sector is summarised in this flowchart:



WHERE transport networks are?

Asian Highway Network in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



“Mobility presents opportunities for improved connections between people. This can lead to benefits, as it enables opportunities for development and enlarges people’s choices. However, it can also lead to threats, as it makes some people more vulnerable to HIV than they were before these connections were possible.”
(Dr LeeNah Hsu, Manager UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Project (UNDP-SEAHIV)).