

# A comprehensive strategy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan 2019



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## **Background**

Pakistan is among the countries with the highest burden of HIV/AIDS in the world, with an estimated 165,000 people living with HIV in 2019. While the overall prevalence is low (0.1%), certain populations are at a significantly higher risk of HIV infection, including truck drivers. Truck drivers are a critical population for HIV prevention in Pakistan due to their high mobility, long working hours, and exposure to sex work, and other high-risk behaviors during their travels. According to some estimates, the HIV prevalence rate among truck drivers in Pakistan is as high as 5-10%, which is substantially higher than the national average. Despite the high risk of HIV infection, truck drivers in Pakistan often face significant barriers to accessing HIV prevention services, including stigma, discrimination, and lack of awareness and education. Therefore, developing a comprehensive and targeted strategy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan is crucial for reducing the overall burden of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The awareness about HIV/AIDS among truck drivers in Pakistan is generally low, and this lack of knowledge is a significant barrier to HIV prevention efforts. A study conducted in 2017 found that only 45% of truck drivers surveyed in Pakistan had a basic knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention. Additionally, truck drivers lack awareness about the availability of HIV prevention services, such as condoms and HIV testing and counseling. This low level of awareness is compounded by the stigma and discrimination that truck drivers face, which can prevent them from accessing HIV prevention services and seeking care and treatment if they do become infected. Therefore, raising awareness and educating truck drivers about HIV prevention is a critical component of any comprehensive strategy to address the high HIV prevalence rate among this key population in Pakistan.

# **Sexual Behaviour of Truck Drivers During Long Hauls**

The sexual behavior of truck drivers during long hauls is complex and varies depending on many factors, including the driver's individual characteristics, cultural norms, and the social and economic context of their work. However, studies have consistently shown that truck drivers are at a higher risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors during their travels, which can increase their vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Long periods of separation from partners and families, combined with the stress and isolation of the job, can contribute to truck drivers seeking sexual partners while on the road. Factors such as the availability of sex workers, cultural norms surrounding sex and masculinity, and the use of alcohol and drugs can also increase the likelihood of engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors, such as having multiple sexual partners, inconsistent condom use, and unprotected sex with commercial sex workers.

Therefore, addressing the sexual behavior of truck drivers during long hauls is a critical component of any strategy for HIV prevention among this key population in Pakistan. Interventions that target the social and economic factors that contribute to risky sexual behaviors, such as improving working conditions and providing access to health services, as well as promoting condom use and testing for HIV and STIs, can help to reduce the risk of HIV transmission among truck drivers and their sexual partners.

Truck drivers in Pakistan are at risk of HIV infection across the country, but certain geographic areas are considered to be more prone to HIV transmission than others. These include major transportation corridors such as the Karakoram Highway, the Indus Highway, and the Grand Trunk Road, which are known to be heavily trafficked by truck drivers.

Additionally, areas with high levels of sex work and other high-risk behaviors, such as drug use, are also considered to be hotspots for HIV transmission among truck drivers. The provinces of Sindh and Punjab, which are home to major urban centers such as Karachi and Lahore, have been identified as high-prevalence areas for HIV/AIDS, including among truck drivers.

However, it is important to note that the risk of HIV infection among truck drivers is not limited to specific geographic areas and that HIV prevention efforts must address the unique vulnerabilities of this population across the country. A comprehensive strategy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan should prioritize targeted interventions that address this key population's specific needs and challenges, regardless of their geographic location.

# **Need for this Strategy**

There is a critical need for a comprehensive strategy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan due to the high prevalence of HIV and the specific vulnerabilities of this population. Truck drivers are a critical population for HIV prevention in Pakistan due to their high mobility, long working hours, exposure to sex work and other high-risk behaviors during their travels. According to some estimates, the HIV prevalence rate among truck drivers in Pakistan is as high as 5-10%, substantially higher than the national average.

Truck drivers in Pakistan often face significant barriers to accessing HIV prevention services, including stigma, discrimination, and lack of awareness and education. The low level of awareness about HIV/AIDS among truck drivers is a significant barrier to HIV prevention efforts. Additionally, the sexual behavior of truck drivers during long hauls can increase their vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Therefore, developing a comprehensive and targeted strategy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan is crucial for reducing the overall burden of HIV/AIDS in the country. The strategy should include evidence-based interventions that target the key drivers of HIV transmission among truck drivers, such as condom promotion and distribution, HIV testing and counseling, and peer education programs. By addressing the specific vulnerabilities of this population and providing access to prevention services, the strategy can help to reduce the risk of HIV transmission among truck drivers and their sexual partners, and contribute to the broader goal of controlling the HIV epidemic in Pakistan.

## **Process for Developing the Strategy**

1. A situation analysis was conducted to collect and analyze data on the epidemiological and social context of HIV among truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Key stakeholders and populations were identified and engaged in the planning and implementation process.
3. A clear vision and mission statement was developed that reflected the strategy's overall goal.
4. Specific objectives and evidence-based strategies for HIV prevention among truck drivers were identified based on the situation analysis and input from stakeholders and key populations.
5. A detailed action plan was developed that outlined the specific activities, timelines, and responsible parties for implementing the strategies identified in step 4.
6. A monitoring and evaluation plan was developed to evaluate the strategy's implementation and impact.
7. The draft policy was shared with stakeholders and key populations for consultation and validation, and their feedback was incorporated into the final policy.
8. The policy was finalized and launched with appropriate communication and dissemination strategies.

# **Objectives of the Strategy**

The specific objectives of a policy for HIV prevention among truck drivers in Pakistan may vary depending on the context and the stakeholders' priorities. However, some common objectives of such a policy could include:

1. Increasing awareness and knowledge of HIV/AIDS among truck drivers and their sexual partners and promoting positive attitudes towards prevention and testing.
2. Increasing access to condoms and other prevention tools, such as lubricants, through targeted distribution and promotion efforts.
3. Providing access to HIV testing and counseling services through mobile clinics, drop-in centers, and other community-based approaches.
4. Strengthening the capacity of health providers and other stakeholders to deliver effective HIV prevention services to truck drivers and their sexual partners.
5. Promoting peer education and outreach programs that engage truck drivers and other key stakeholders in HIV prevention efforts.
6. Addressing the social and economic factors contributing to HIV transmission among truck drivers, such as improving working conditions, reducing stigma and discrimination, and promoting access to other health services.

The specific objectives of the policy should be based on the epidemiological and social context of the targeted population the resources and capacities of the stakeholders involved in the policy development and implementation process. By setting clear objectives and strategies to achieve them, the policy can help to ensure that the efforts to prevent HIV among truck drivers are evidence-based, targeted, and effective.

## **Vision Statement**

A future where truck drivers in Pakistan are empowered to protect themselves and their communities against HIV through access to comprehensive prevention and care services.

## **Mission Statement**

To reduce the transmission of HIV among truck drivers in Pakistan by improving their access to high-quality prevention, testing, treatment, and care services. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies that are tailored to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of truck drivers and their sexual partners. The strategy will prioritize the engagement of key stakeholders and communities in the planning and implementation process and will ensure that the rights and dignity of truck drivers are respected and protected throughout.

# Stakeholders

**Truck driver associations:** These organizations can play a critical role in the development and implementation of the strategy by:

- Advocating for the rights and interests of truck drivers and ensuring that their perspectives and needs are reflected in the strategy.
- Facilitating the engagement and participation of their members in the planning and implementation process.
- Providing feedback and insights on the feasibility and effectiveness of the strategies from the perspective of truck drivers.
- Providing support in the implementation of the strategies, such as through referrals and outreach to their members.
- Promoting the sustainability and scale-up of the strategy through their networks and partnerships.

**Government agencies:** Various government agencies can contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy by:

- Providing policy and regulatory support, such as through the development of guidelines and standards for HIV prevention and care services for truck drivers.
- Allocating and mobilizing resources for the implementation of the strategy, such as through budgetary support and coordination with other sectors and agencies.
- Providing technical and logistical support for the implementation of the strategies, such as through the provision of training and equipment for health workers and outreach teams.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of the strategy, and making necessary adjustments and improvements based on the findings.

**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** NGOs that work with truck drivers and their communities can play a critical role in the development and implementation of the strategy by:

- Providing technical expertise and support in developing and implementing the strategies through training and capacity building for health workers and outreach teams.
- Providing outreach and education services to truck drivers and their sexual partners, such as through the provision of HIV testing and counseling, condom distribution, and referral to care services.
- Providing referral services for truck drivers who need access to more specialized care, such as HIV treatment and care, STI management
- Advocating for the rights and interests of truck drivers and their communities and raising awareness about HIV and other health issues affecting them.
- Advocating for the rights and interests of truck drivers and their communities and raising awareness about HIV and other health issues affecting them.
- Providing legal and community mobilization support to truck drivers and their communities to ensure that their rights and dignity are protected throughout the implementation of the strategy.
- Promoting the sustainability and scale-up of the strategy through their networks and partnerships.

# Stakeholders

## Road Side Hotels and Restaurants

By engaging with roadside hotels and restaurants as stakeholders, the HIV prevention strategy can leverage its reach and influence to improve the uptake and impact of HIV prevention interventions among truck drivers in Pakistan.

- Providing a space for awareness-raising activities, such as distributing information materials, peer education sessions, and HIV testing services.
- Supporting the recruitment and training of peer educators and outreach workers who can reach out to truck drivers and their sexual partners at these establishments.
- Encouraging the adoption of safe sex practices and condom use among their staff and customers, and providing access to condoms and lubricants at their facilities.
- Advocating for policies and regulations that promote the health and safety of truck drivers, including measures to prevent discrimination and stigma related to HIV status.
- Participating in partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders, such as truck driver associations, health clinics, and law enforcement agencies, to coordinate efforts and resources for HIV prevention and care.

**International partners and donors:** International organizations and donors can contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy by:

- Providing financial and technical support for developing and implementing the strategy and mobilizing resources to support its sustainability and scale-up.
- Aligning the strategy with global and regional standards and targets and ensuring that it is integrated with other HIV prevention and care initiatives in Pakistan and the region.

# **Key Strategies**

1. Conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities related to HIV prevention and care among truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Develop a comprehensive and evidence-based HIV prevention and care program for truck drivers in Pakistan, including selecting appropriate interventions and developing a monitoring and evaluation plan.
3. Build the capacity of health workers and peer educators to provide high-quality and culturally sensitive HIV prevention and care services for truck drivers in Pakistan.
4. Establish partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders, including truck driver associations, health clinics, law enforcement agencies, roadside hotels and restaurants, and other organizations involved in the transportation sector.
5. Develop and implement an advocacy and communication plan to raise awareness about HIV prevention and care among truck drivers, their employers, and other stakeholders in the transportation sector.
6. Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track the implementation and impact of the HIV prevention and care program among truck drivers in Pakistan.

# **Operational Plan**

## **I. Needs Assessment:**

1. Develop a survey to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of truck drivers and their sexual partners regarding HIV prevention and care.
2. Collect and analyze data on the prevalence of HIV among truck drivers in Pakistan, as well as on the availability and accessibility of HIV prevention and care services.
3. Conduct focus group discussions and key informant interviews with truck drivers, health workers, peer educators, and other stakeholders to identify the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities related to HIV prevention and care among truck drivers in Pakistan.

## **II. Program Development:**

1. Review and analyze the data and findings from the needs assessment to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based HIV prevention and care program for truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Identify appropriate interventions and strategies, including peer education, condom distribution, HIV testing and counseling, and linkage to care and treatment services.
3. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to track the implementation and impact of the program, including the development of indicators, data collection tools, and reporting templates.

# Operational Plan

## III. Capacity Building:

1. Develop and implement training programs for health workers, peer educators, and outreach workers on HIV prevention and care for truck drivers, including the development of training materials, job aids, and other support tools.
2. Build the capacity of health clinics and other service delivery points to provide culturally sensitive and high-quality HIV prevention and care services to truck drivers and their sexual partners.

## IV. Partnership and Collaboration:

1. Identify and establish partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders, including truck driver associations, health clinics, law enforcement agencies, roadside hotels and restaurants, and other organizations involved in the transportation sector.
2. Develop and implement joint advocacy and communication activities to raise awareness about HIV prevention and care among truck drivers, their employers, and other stakeholders in the transportation sector.

## V. Advocacy and Communication:

1. Develop and implement an advocacy and communication plan to raise awareness about HIV prevention and care among truck drivers, their employers, and other stakeholders in the transportation sector, including the development of messages, materials, and channels for communication.
2. Conduct awareness-raising activities, such as community meetings, outreach events, and social media campaigns, to increase knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to HIV prevention and care among truck drivers and their sexual partners

## VI. Monitoring and Evaluation:

1. Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track the implementation and impact of the HIV prevention and care program among truck drivers in Pakistan, including the development of a database, data quality control procedures, and regular reporting.
2. Conduct regular program reviews and evaluations to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of the program, and to identify opportunities for improvement and expansion.

The operational plan will be implemented over a period of three years, with regular review and adjustment based on feedback and evaluation results. The plan will be led by a dedicated team of program managers, technical experts, and field staff, and will involve the active participation and engagement of all stakeholders.

# Timelines

## Year 1

1. Conduct a needs assessment and develop a comprehensive HIV prevention and care program for truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Build the capacity of health workers and peer educators to deliver HIV prevention and care services to truck drivers.
3. Establish partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders, including truck driver associations, health clinics, and roadside hotels and restaurants.
4. Conduct awareness-raising activities and joint advocacy and communication activities to raise awareness about HIV prevention and care among truck drivers and their employers.

## Year 2

1. Roll out the HIV prevention and care program, including peer education, condom distribution, HIV testing and counseling, and linkage to care and treatment services.
2. Expand the program to reach more truck drivers and their sexual partners, and strengthen the capacity of health clinics and other service delivery points to provide HIV prevention and care services.
3. Conduct regular program reviews and evaluations to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of the program, and to identify opportunities for improvement and expansion.
4. Continue awareness-raising activities and joint advocacy and communication activities to sustain awareness about HIV prevention and care among truck drivers and their employers.

## Year 3

1. Consolidate the gains made in Years 1 and 2 and ensure sustainability of the HIV prevention and care program for truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Conduct a final program review and evaluation, and develop a plan for scaling up and replicating the program in other regions of Pakistan.
3. Conduct advocacy and communication activities to disseminate the results and impact of the program, and to mobilize resources and support for continued HIV prevention and care efforts among truck drivers in Pakistan.

Just so you know, the timeline is indicative and may be subject to change based on the context and needs of the program. The operational plan will be reviewed and adjusted regularly to ensure the program is on track and delivering the desired results.

# Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization is critical to implementing the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. Here are some strategies that can be used to mobilize resources:

- 1. Government funding:** The government can allocate funds to support implementing of the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. This can be done through the national AIDS program or other relevant government agencies.
- 2. International donor support:** International donors can provide financial and technical support to implement the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. This can be through bilateral aid or global health initiatives.
- 3. Corporate social responsibility:** Companies in the trucking and logistics industry can contribute to implementing the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan through corporate social responsibility initiatives. This can include financial contributions, in-kind support, or the involvement of their employees in awareness-raising and capacity-building activities.
- 4. Public-private partnerships:** Partnerships between the public and private sectors can be established to mobilize resources and support implementing the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. This can involve joint financing, co-creation of programs, and sharing expertise and resources.
- 5. Community support:** The community can be critical in mobilizing resources to implement the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. This can involve mobilizing volunteers, organizing fundraising events, or creating awareness about the issue and the need for resources.

It is important to note that resource mobilization is an ongoing process and requires constant effort and attention. The HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan will need to continuously engage with stakeholders and partners to identify and mobilize resources for the effective implementation of the program.

# Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is essential for effectively implementing the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. Here is a detailed plan for monitoring and evaluating the strategy:

1. Baseline assessment: Before the implementation of the strategy, a baseline assessment should be conducted to gather data on the current situation regarding HIV prevalence, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among truck drivers in Pakistan.
2. Output and outcome indicators: The M&E plan should include specific output and outcome indicators to measure progress toward achieving the strategy's objectives. These indicators may include the number of truck drivers reached with HIV prevention messages, the number of HIV tests conducted, and the rate of condom use among truck drivers.
3. Data collection and analysis: Data collection tools should be developed to track progress on the output and outcome indicators. These tools may include surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The data collected should be analyzed regularly to identify trends, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
4. Reporting and dissemination: Regular reports should be produced to share progress on the implementation of the strategy with stakeholders and partners. This may include quarterly or annual reports on specific activities or events. The reports should be shared through various communication channels, such as websites, newsletters, and social media.
5. Mid-term and final evaluations: Mid-term and final evaluations should be conducted to assess the strategy's effectiveness in achieving its objectives. The evaluations should include an analysis of the output and outcome indicators, as well as an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy. The findings of the evaluations should be used to improve the implementation of the strategy.
6. Learning and improvement: Learning and improvement should be an ongoing process throughout the implementation of the strategy. The M&E plan should include mechanisms for learning and improvement, such as regular review meetings, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for reflection and analysis.
7. Budget and resource allocation: The M&E plan should include a budget for the monitoring and evaluation activities. The resources required for the M&E activities should be allocated in a way that ensures the effective implementation of the strategy and the achievement of its objectives.

Overall, the M&E plan should be an integral part of the HIV prevention strategy for truck drivers in Pakistan. It should provide a systematic and comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluating progress, identifying challenges and opportunities for improvement, and ensuring the effective implementation of the strategy.

# **Result Chain**

**Impact: Reduced incidence of HIV among truck drivers in Pakistan.**

**Outcome 1: Increased knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention among truck drivers.**

**Output 1.1: Increased awareness of routes of HIV transmission among truck drivers.**

**Activities:**

- Conduct HIV prevention and awareness workshops for truck drivers at truck stops and rest areas.
- Provide educational materials on HIV transmission and prevention to truck drivers.
- Facilitate discussions and sharing of experiences among truck drivers on HIV prevention and transmission.

**Inputs:**

- Trained workshop facilitators.
- Educational materials on HIV transmission and prevention.
- Meeting space and supplies (e.g. flip charts, markers).

**Output 1.2: Increased adoption of effective HIV prevention methods among truck drivers.**

**Activities:**

- Distribute free condoms to truck drivers at truck stops and rest areas.
- Provide information on and access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
- Facilitate discussions and sharing of experiences among truck drivers on effective HIV prevention methods.

**Inputs:**

- Condoms and lubricants.
- Trained staff to provide PrEP and PEP.
- Meeting space and supplies (e.g. flip charts, markers).

# Result Chain

**Outcome 2: Increased access to HIV testing and counseling services among truck drivers.**

Output 2.1: Increased uptake of HIV testing and counseling services among truck drivers.

Activities:

- Provide free and confidential HIV testing and counseling services to truck drivers at truck stops and rest areas.
- Offer on-site counseling and referral to care and treatment services for those who test positive.
- Facilitate discussions and sharing of experiences among truck drivers on HIV testing and counseling.

Inputs:

- Trained staff to provide HIV testing and counseling.
- Testing supplies and equipment.
- Referral pathways to care and treatment services.

Output 2.2: Improved linkage to care and treatment services for HIV-positive truck drivers.

Activities:

- Provide information on and access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV-positive truck drivers.
- Offer support to truck drivers to facilitate adherence to ART.
- Facilitate discussions and sharing of experiences among truck drivers on living with HIV and accessing care and treatment.

Inputs:

- Trained staff to provide ART and support services.
- Medications and supplies.
- Support materials (e.g. peer support groups).

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