



International  
Labour  
Organization

## EMPOWERING HIV VULNERABLE PEOPLE ALONG THE TRANSPORT CORRIDORS IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe is among the countries in sub-Saharan Africa that is the most affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. In 2012 the country had a prevalence of 14.72 per cent among adults between 15 and 49 years of age. At that time, the percentage had fallen from an estimated peak of 27.6 per cent in 1997, mainly as a result of successful prevention strategies – especially behavioural change, high condom use and a reduction in multiple concurrent sexual partners.

Nevertheless, prevalence remains high and new data around modes of transmission collected in 2010-11 highlighted a need to:

- Focus attention on priority populations, including sexually-active young people and adults, and sex workers and their clients;
- Go beyond traditional prevention methods and address the underlying causes of risky behaviour or lack of access to HIV services, including the economic empowerment of HIV-vulnerable populations.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

#### Partners:

The Small Enterprise Development Corporation (SEDCO), the SEDCO/CEEIF arrangement includes a number of private sector partners, such as: the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB), the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

**Beneficiary country:**  
Zimbabwe

**Timeframe:**  
2011 – 2014

**Budget:**  
SEDCO:  
USD 120,000

### THE RESPONSE

A partnership was established between the ILO, the Small Enterprise Development Corporation of Zimbabwe (SEDCO), multiple private sector partners such as the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB), the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to address the challenge.

In 2011, the ILO established a programme along the transport corridors in Chirundu, Kotwa, Nyamapanda, Beitbridge and Ngundu, which provides HIV prevention and care services for transport workers and populations operating along these corridors, as well as business-related services enabling vulnerable populations to start or improve

their business, form cooperatives and access funds to improve their resilience to the impacts of HIV.

A Corridor Economic Empowerment Innovation Fund (CEEIF) has also been established to facilitate the access of vulnerable groups – who normally lack collateral security – to credit and related services from microfinance organizations.

The CEEIF also provides business-related services to vulnerable groups and nurtures a culture of self-reliance, entrepreneurship and enterprise development.

### RESULTS

Members from 20 business support structures, cooperatives, business groups and savings and credit cooperative organizations (SACCOs) were trained in business management, SACCO formation, business ideas development, and HIV/AIDS prevention. They were also able to access loans. Over 500 at-risk or affected persons and their families were provided with applicable skills.

As a result, 195 businesses were started or improved during the project's duration. Furthermore, due to the sustainable structure of the CEEIF and its scope to expand to new locations, this figure will continue to grow well beyond the end of the project.

Outcomes were monitored biannually, with the latest survey conducted in 2013. Drawing



*"I am HIV-positive. Through the support of the project my life, and those of our members, has changed. The project has opened doors for me and others in SACCO, who – like me – were languishing with poverty, disease and hopelessness in life. We received very useful information, training and financial support. Old Mutual the local Municipality, has recognized us – the people living with HIV – and has given us a plot worth USD 50,000 at today's market value. We are now operating our general merchandise business. We no longer feel ashamed of our HIV status. All this would never have come without the ILO's support."*

Jerry Toziraripi,  
Chairperson of  
Lufuno SACCOs

on a representative sample of 53 beneficiaries, the following results were observed:

- Improvements in socio-economic status – beneficiaries and their families felt the economic impact of these innovations, with 36 per cent reporting an improvement in their self-perceived socio-economic status;
  - A significant increase in the investments made by beneficiary families in children's education (average increase from USD 78 to 162).
- Beyond economic impacts, changes were noted in beneficiaries' HIV-related behaviours. Crucially, the number of women who stopped engaging in transactional sex (over the previous three months) rose from 56 to 76 per cent. Other significant changes included:
- Fewer women beneficiaries reported engaging in multiple concurrent sexual partnerships (over the previous three months) – the figure was down from 14 to 0 per cent;
  - Forty-seven per cent of beneficiaries reported an increase in their self-efficacy to either negotiate condom use or refuse sex;
  - An increase in beneficiaries' awareness of local HIV services – from 71 to 92 per cent;
  - An increase in women beneficiaries' knowledge of their own HIV status – from 64 to 94 per cent.

In addition to these immediate improvements, the CEEIF reached more than 7,000 truck drivers, taxi drivers, clearing agents at border crossings, and community members, providing them with HIV prevention messages delivered by peer educators, radio and the televised media. As a likely outcome of these messages, 798 people are now accessing health-related services – including voluntary HIV counselling and testing, care and support, prevention of mother to child transmission, TB, and sexual and reproductive health services.



#### **Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV)**

International Labour Organization  
4, Route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 799 7309  
Fax +41 22 799 6668  
E-mail: [ppp@ilo.org](mailto:ppp@ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/ppp](http://www.ilo.org/ppp)

#### **BENEFITS OF PARTNERING**

The social and economic vulnerability of people living with HIV in the transport corridors has been reduced. In addition, a combination of effective preventative measures and innovative economic empowerment has lowered risks of further infection in the community. Following the close of the project, SEDCO continued managing the CEEIF fund, thus ensuring that it will still benefit more persons in the corridor communities.

The programme both provided the Government with technical support, and strengthened efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS. It also made available evidence to policy-makers, so that they might advocate for changes that positively affect vulnerable populations.

The POSB has an increased clientele among poor and vulnerable members of the population, and in the long-term their market base will increase. When these clients graduate from running micro-businesses to running small and medium enterprises, they will borrow from SEDCO, thus increasing SEDCO's clientele and market share. These clients were trained by the project in enterprise management, thus reducing their risk. In essence, the ILO supported SEDCO in reaching out to the "unreachable", and transformed once risky clients into potentially fundable business and enterprise ventures.