



ONE for the ROAD

How many people die on the roads? While it's not talked about much, worldwide, the figure is 1.3m, two-thirds the population of Northern Ireland – every year. This is one hazard that every country in the world shares, but the burden is not distributed equally. Most of the deaths are in lower-middle income countries, and most of these are in Africa.

In sub-Saharan Africa, road deaths are the third biggest killer, after HIV and malaria. On top are those suffering life-changing injuries. As young men of 15-29 are disproportionately more likely to be involved in road traffic accidents, families are deprived of traditional family breadwinners, and the suffering spreads.

Compounding the risks is economic development, which tends to increase traffic. One recent example is to and from the rift valley basins in western Uganda where commercially exploitable oil and gas reserves are currently being explored. "Economic development is important, but infrastructure and training needs to keep pace," states Florence Bearman, Transaid head of funding.

In 1998 the organisation separated from Save The Children, having been born nearby, in Ethiopia, during the mid-1980s famine. At the time, Princess Anne, visiting the country on behalf of the charity of which she serves as patron, saw first-hand how logistics and transport difficulties prevented much-needed aid from reaching starving communities, and

Over its 25-year history, just one of international road transport charity Transaid's projects has trained 150 driver-trainers who have together taught 50,000 truck, coach and bus drivers, helping improve road safety in east Africa

challenged the UK's CILT, of which she is also patron, to help. As an independent organisation, Transaid has been able to attract more funding and more support, Bearman said, whether organising high-profile fundraising cycling tours (this year, London to Paris, 21-25 September) or through attracting corporate sponsorship from companies such as IVECO, MAN, Michelin, Wincanton and CILT.

Its longest-running project is supporting Zambia's Industrial Training Centre in driver training, partly through secondment of trainers from generous UK transport operators, as well as accepting donations of vehicles (this year, from Samworth Brothers and Fagan & Whalley). Bearman states: "The train-the-trainer model is important because it creates infrastructure. Institutes that we work with are well-placed to train drivers properly in the future. We work with institutions and partners to ensure that we have a sustainable way of working."

Over the last few years, Transaid has also expanded driver training support

to two new countries in different parts of Africa, Mozambique and Ghana (in total, it operates in 11). In the former, it supports small and medium-sized driver training centres; in the latter, it improves training standards with a new curriculum.

That is not all. Another project in east Africa supports building and using pushbike-powered ambulances, which can navigate rural unpaved roads at a fraction of the cost of the engined sort.

To support other communities where it is not currently active, Transaid has released training materials and blueprints, including for the bicycle ambulance scheme. "We put them in our knowledge centre, so anyone can go and download documents to replicate our work." This is because of an acknowledged issue in the development sector of redesigning the wheel, Bearman adds. "People are making mistakes that have already been made by other organisations."

As its operations develop, she credits the steadfast support of Transaid donors, particularly through the COVID-19 period, when many international development organisations have struggled (and when the UK government itself reduced its own aid spending).

Bearman concludes: "We have a supporter base across transport and logistics that continues to champion and support programmes for communities and people that they will never meet. I think that is an amazing testament to the industry." 