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The advertisement features a central image of a two-story house with a brick lower level and white upper level, set against a green and yellow background. In the foreground, two cans of Airooma air freshener are displayed: a blue one on the left and a green one on the right. The blue can is labeled 'NEW!' and 'Airooma' with a yellow starburst. The green can is also labeled 'Airooma' and features a white flower illustration. A large blue banner with the 'Airooma' logo is positioned in the upper left. White flowers are scattered throughout the scene, particularly on the right side. The text 'Enhance your home' is written in a bold, dark font at the bottom right of the advertisement.

**Enhance your home**



**BUSINESS TRANSPORT, SUPPLY CHAIN & LOGISTICS FOCUS**

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## Truck Drivers Benefit From Roadside Wellness Clinics

**D**riving a truck for a living is not easy for some. This overlooked profession is fraught with abuse, where workers have to work long hours enduring extended periods of time away from their families, and with little or no healthcare provided by employers.

While this is not necessarily a deliberate oversight on the part of road freight operators themselves, the lifestyles and working conditions of truck drivers are not conducive to conventional methods of medical treatment. Often the employed driver cannot make use of provided healthcare because he is too busy doing his job - constantly on the road hundreds of kilometres from home or head office.

In an effort to reduce operational downtime and driver absenteeism linked to poor health, Corridor Empowerment Project, a non-profit organisation and the project manager for Trucking Wellness, set up a number of Trucking Wellness Centres on major trucking routes to improve the health of road freight drivers.

Initially launched as a joint effort called 'Trucking Against Aids', the project was run by several South African road freight companies, trade unions and government agencies, and co-funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Mercedes-Benz through SABCOHA. From these initial efforts, Trucking Wellness has grown dramatically, establishing 20 wellness centres situated along major trucking routes in South Africa, with an additional five mobile wellness units able to visit the premises of trucking companies for on-site consultations and treatment.

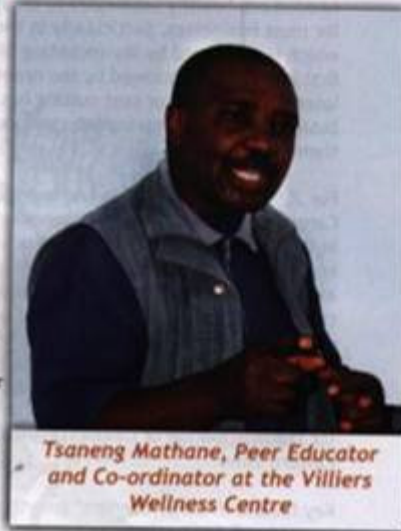
The lifestyle of the average truck driver does not lend itself to good health - poor nutrition, inadequate sleep and poor hygiene on the road contribute to a number of adverse health conditions. But the most damaging factor is the consequence of drivers using commercial sex workers picked up on the side of the road or at truck stops.

Petrus Tamle from Westonaria in Gauteng, a veteran driver of 25 years, says that prostitutes are almost a part of the culture of truck driving. "The younger ones can't seem to settle down. They say things like 'I can't sleep alone'. Some use prostitutes five or six times a day."

This has introduced a swathe of health problems for drivers in the form of sexually transmitted infections. "There are many drivers who get sick from the prostitutes and some of them have died from AIDS," adds Tamle. "My company has twelve big trucks, and all the drivers there are new. Five years back, three younger colleagues died from HIV/AIDS". Trucking Wellness has evolved to address this primary issue within the trucking industry, and the project is designed to create HIV/AIDS and STI awareness not only among the drivers themselves but also among commercial sex workers and the communities around the various truck stops. The centres also provide counselling and treatment.

Built into specially adapted 12-metre freight containers with electricity and air-conditioning, these comfortable and

homely clinics operate mostly after hours and at night when drivers are off duty. Each centre employs a professional nurse and a peer educator, who are able to treat drivers for a variety of health problems from backache and flu to high blood pressure. More importantly, drivers are encouraged to be counselled and tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The CareWorks organisation provides confidential counselling, pathology tests and appropriate anti-retroviral treatment for HIV positive drivers if necessary through the Wellness Fund of the National Bargaining Council for the Road freight Industry (NBCRFI).



*Tsaneng Mathane, Peer Educator and Co-ordinator at the Villiers Wellness Centre*

Since the project was launched by the NBCRFI in 1999, the clinic services have expanded to provide education, primary healthcare, STI testing and treatment, food supplements, condom distribution, voluntary HIV testing, as well as referrals to treatment service provider CareWorks.

However, in order for these services to benefit the wider trucking industry, it's vital that drivers be encouraged to make use of the centres - no mean feat according to Tamle. "The drivers are often afraid of knowing what is wrong with them," he says. "But someone needs to send a message to them that they need to know their status, and know about their health."

And it seems the battle would be half won if drivers could be persuaded to use the clinics. Tsaneng Mathane, peer educator and co-ordinator at the Villiers Wellness Centre, finds it encouraging that drivers are often willing to be completely open about their sexual activities. "Although it might be hard to get them to visit the clinic, once they are here they are not afraid to tell me their secrets and they are open to being tested for HIV," he says. "Also, most of the patients participate in the education sessions. Sometimes I even go to the truck myself and explain the benefits of visiting the clinic - it's there for them, the medication is free, the testing is free, but it is up to them to go and make use of the services."

"I've been driving trucks for twenty-five years, and I've been driving since I was eleven, especially tractors on the farms," says Petrus Tamle. "I decided to start visiting the clinics because the last medical test I had was in the 80s for diabetes and high blood pressure; things like that. I'm 63 years old and happy to be healthy, and happy that the clinics can tell me that I'm healthy."