

PRESS RELEASE



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Stagecoach drives forward Ghana transport project

Stagecoach Group has united with international development charity Transaid to provide vital driver training for a female market traders' project in Ghana. The Perth-based transport group is providing funding for Stagecoach driver training officer Tricia Brennan to spend two months training drivers from the Women's Transport Cooperative in Ghana's capital city, Accra.

In addition to her driver training role, Tricia – who is based at Stagecoach's Exeter depot – will work with three key transport and road safety organisations to help develop unified private and commercial driver training standards across Ghana.

The first stage of training was delivered by Transaid to the cooperative in March 2008 and focused on basic techniques for commercial van driving. Tricia will implement the second part of the project to again provide training for new drivers and further improve the knowledge and skills of those in the original team.

Tricia will also assist the National Road Safety Commission (NRSC) to develop commercial driver training standards and is tasked with helping to improve driving standards at West Africa's largest bus operator, Metro Mass Transit (MMT). She will also work with Road Safety Limited (RSL) – a truck driver training institute – to strengthen commercial truck driver competence.

Tricia said: "I'm looking forward to sharing my skills with the women to increase their knowledge of how to keep themselves and other road users safe, as well as increasing their awareness of efficient vehicle handling when transporting goods to and from the market."

"This is a wonderful opportunity for me to make a difference to others and I'm really looking forward to it."

In Accra, women are the lifeblood of the community and provide the majority of goods bought and sold at the markets. However, the lack of an appropriate and affordable transport service forces them into a punishing daily routine which reduces their profits and leads them to work long and dangerous hours, often from 4am until 11pm.

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Transaid began working with female market traders in Accra in 2006. Working alongside many partners, Transaid helped establish the Women's Transport Cooperative in Accra by developing a business plan for a sound, sustainable transport operation. The cooperative was then gifted three vans – donated by Iveco - to assist the women in their trading and to enable them to own, manage and control their own fleet of transport.

However, road safety in Ghana is of a poor standard. Commercial drivers are often untrained and unlicensed. Currently, the Ghanaian Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) estimates that four people are killed on the road every day. Improved driver training is viewed as the single most important factor in reducing the number of road accidents.

Stagecoach UK Bus Managing Director Les Warneford said: "Transaid and its partners have made huge strides by establishing the Women's Transport Cooperative in Accra. Now we must make sure the drivers are trained to a high standard and that their vehicles are well-maintained. Stagecoach has a comprehensive training system for all our drivers here in the UK and we also have first-hand experience of the difficulties involved in operating bus services in Africa.

"We're delighted that Tricia has the opportunity to pass on her knowledge to local people and to the Ghanaian transport bodies, and we hope that her visit will go some way to improving road safety across Ghana as well as bringing long-term benefits to the Women's Transport Cooperative."

Chris Saunders, CEO Transaid said: "It is a great privilege to be able to draw upon Stagecoach's expertise, and to facilitate the transfer of vital skills and knowledge to our projects in Africa where they can have a huge impact on people's lives.

"The valuable input from Stagecoach to the Transaid Female Market Trader's Project will enable the cooperative to become even more effective and operate more safely and efficiently in a highly competitive arena.

"This will ultimately enable the women to benefit from increased profits and more time for family life due to less arduous working conditions."

- Tricia will travel to Ghana on Sunday (18 January)

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Stagecoach Group

Stagecoach Group is a leading international public transport group, with extensive operations in the UK, United States and Canada. The company employs around 30,000 people, and operates bus, coach, rail, and tram services.

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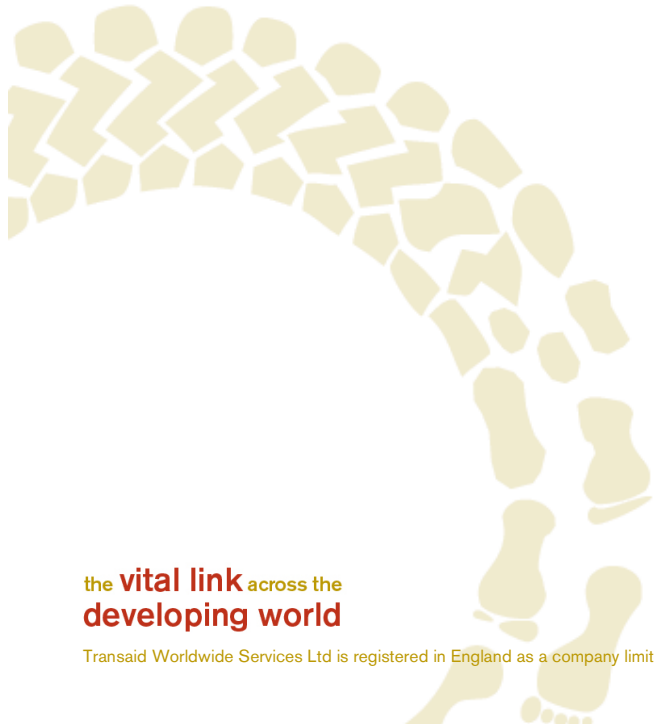
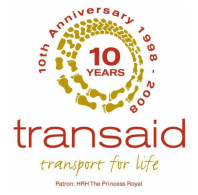
Note to Editor:

Transaid (www.transaid.org) is an international development agency that aims to improve people's quality of life in the developing world by making transport more available and affordable. It was founded by Save The Children and the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) and works by sharing skills and knowledge with local people to enable them to put in place and manage efficient transport systems. Transaid's core work includes creating transport management systems for the public sector and assisting with the provision of professional driving qualification development and the training of driver trainers. It also assists with teaching preventive vehicle maintenance management and introducing local, low cost transport solutions including its innovative bicycle ambulance. Transaid also helps promote HIV, AIDS and road safety awareness and shares its specialist knowledge with the industry and the active involvement of its patron, HRH The Princess Royal.

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