Using New Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to ensure the continuum of care to mobile patients along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor

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The Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organization (ALCO) is a leading regional response to HIV vulnerability of mobile populations such as sex workers, truckers and mobile populations along the Abidjan-Lagos Transport Corridor in the West Africa sub-region.

The high Mobility of these target groups is an obstacle to their consistent access to HIV care and support. To address this issue, ALCO set up a patient tracking system called Corridor Medical Transfer System (COMETS). This system was developed by North Star Alliance and is used in Southern and Eastern Africa.

The COMETS is designed to keep track of mobile patients such as sex workers and truckers, who are on treatment but due to their profession, do not stay at one place. It is used to link centers together so that as clients move from one place to another their health records move with them.

The system, along with the individual’s personal code allows the monitoring of people who visit the center, their health status, how they are treated, whether they return and whether this same individual goes or is referred to another center or health service providers along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor.

The COMETS became operational in the Abidjan-Lagos corridor in May 2012 and services provided included diagnosis and treatment of STIs, HIV Testing and Counseling and distribution of condoms. It was the first of its kind in the West Africa sub-region.

After two years of pilot implementation, 908 clients made up of truckers, sex workers and women traders of different nationalities with women representing 69% benefitted from STI and HTC cross-border services and captured by into the COMETS. Out of this, 163 clients mostly women have been referred to the national programs for STI treatment (87 women) and ART treatment (49 female and 27 male).

The use of COMETS revealed that mobile patients on treatment can easily be tracked and treatment adherence enforced.