

Taxi drivers get an image boost

To some, taxi drivers are just a bunch of road hogs who are a menace to other road users and rude to commuters.



The public image of taxi drivers needs to change says Satwo's Vusi Ndlovu. Image: Nissan

"We have been known as the filthy, dirty rude people. But people forget that we are the ones who get the economy of the country ticking by ferrying commuters every day," says Vusi Ndlovu.

He is the organiser of the SA Taxi Workers Organisation (Satwo), a new body that aims to change the image of taxi drivers and fight for their rights.

The organisation, also popularly known as Qina Mshayeli, was formed two years ago. Satwo is now engaged in a project to change the negative perceptions of taxi drivers.

Sotwa has teamed up with transport and logistics sector education and training authority (Seta) to enrol the first group of taxi drivers in a four-month training course in Durban.

One week in a month 35 drivers will be trained in defensive driving, first aid, fire-fighting, HIV and Aids and customer care.

Mobile clinics

Apart from this, the KZN department of health is planning to have mobile clinics at taxi ranks to ensure that drivers and their assistants are able to test for HIV and other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis.

Satwo says it has applied for funding to train the next group of 500 taxi drivers to ensure this training reaches as many drivers as possible.

"Taxi bosses want their daily takings and on the other hand traffic authorities are very hard on us. This often results in

many taxi drivers driving badly," says Sotwa general secretary Msa Khoza.

Khoza said: "We decided to form this organisation so that our voice could be heard. It was difficult to introduce the union in the violence-ravaged taxi industry, with some bosses sending their henchmen to warn union leaders they are treading on thin ice," he said.

"But we have persevered and now we can see the light at the end of the tunnel because the bosses and the authorities are taking us seriously," he said.

Boy Zondi, provincial chairperson of the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO), said it was good that drivers were standing up to fight for their own rights.

Source: Sowetan via I-net Bridge

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