Policy Brief

MOZAMBIQUE: Urban Mobility, Accessibility & COVID-19

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What policies have been put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 in relation to mobility and accessibility?

- State of National Emergency declared on 30/03/2020, giving increased legislative power to national authorities

- Established sectorial expert groups to advise the government

- A reduction in the maximum capacity of collective transport - large or minibuses cannot have more passengers than their seated arrangements - passengers should not be standing or sharing the same seat

- Encourage bus operators to disinfect vehicles

- The closure of general and higher education institutions - which helps to reduce pressure on the limited transport system

- Masks are compulsory in crowded public areas and collective transport vehicles (including in minibuses)

- Cultural, sport and leisure activities are significantly restricted. Large gatherings are banned. Drinking alcohol in public areas is prohibited. Bars have to close at 8PM and have reduced capacity. Food shops have reduced their opening hours and the majority have to close by 5PM

COVID-19 situation in Mozambique

- The first COVID-19 cases were registered in March 2020

- Most cases are in Maputo and Cabo Delgado (Northernmost Province of Mozambique)

- As of 05/06/2020, there are 352 confirmed cases and 2 deaths

- Collective transport is a key vector of contagion, at hubs and within vehicles.

- Collective transport is essential for residents and workers to access basic services and employment, whom they depend on to survive, for a large percentage almost daily

- In Maputo, public and collective transport capacity is usually limited, in particular at peak times. This situation has worsened since the beginning of the crisis.

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The challenge for public authorities

- At a high level, the strategic objective is to take the necessary steps to slow down the spread of the pandemic in the country, in the hope that:
  - as scientific research progresses across the world, new and more efficient treatments or prevention measures will become available in Mozambique
  - by slowing contagion rates healthcare facilities will not be overwhelmed
- The challenge is to maintain a balance between limiting population movements and enforcing physical distancing while meeting people's basic needs and ability to survive, and avoiding an economic crisis
- The mobility and transport system should limit the spread of the virus while maintaining access by communities to essential goods, opportunities and services, including access to healthcare
- Transport is a sensitive sector that has been the cause of social conflicts in the country. Taking the right measures is a delicate issue for any government in the current context.
- Limiting the ability of workers to earn a living in the transport sector could jeopardise social peace.
- Asking transport operators to bear the operational cost of the measures adopted by the Government is leading to a decline in offer as operators limit the number of vehicles in circulation

Proposed institutional & governance measures to ensure the safe movement of people & maintain essential accessibility

Governance

Authorities must consider transport and mobility systems as 'essential service' because there are indispensable for key sectors to continue to function safely and efficiently (e.g. key workers need to travel to work)

Set-up a cross-sectorial committee involving health and transport authorities, at the national and local level (and possibly involving other sectors)

Foster safe active travel

Foster the use of cycling and walking by expanding dedicated infrastructure and space. For example, by taking space away from roads or parking spaces (as seen in hundreds of cities such as Barcelona or Addis Ababa). This will help pedestrians maintain physical distancing, and this will encourage new cyclists. In addition to enabling people to move more safely, it will contribute to improving people's physical and mental health. It will also contribute to reducing pollution levels ensuring greater public health and lower levels of contagion.

Reorganise public and collective transport

Establish a dialogue with private operators to understand the difficulties they face in complying with the new rules

Prioritize the circulation of public and collective transport to reduce travel time (for instance, by creating bus lanes)

Establish incentives to support collective transport operators and workers. This could include:

- Providing fuel
- Providing disinfection material
- Reducing taxes
- Providing subsidies

Develop the electronic ticketing system for improved hygiene and greater control over the implementation of the measures required by the Government

Use collective transport vehicles or hubs to communicate with the public (e.g. by distributing information leaflets or putting posters indicating medical help numbers, anti-violence numbers, etc.)

Road Safety

A decrease in traffic is likely to lead to increased vehicle speed as the roads are less congested, increasing the risk of accidents:

- Lower speed limits
- Ensure that speed limits are respected

Accessibility

Establish measures to reduce the need for displacement by ensuring minimum access to essential services, and employment in neighbourhoods

Strengthen and support freight transport at the metropolitan, inter-provincial and international levels as basic and priority components, to avoid a supply crisis

Increase virtual communication is also key to increase accessibility. Telecommunication providers have an important role to play. Telephone operators must reinforce the capacity of the telephone and data network so that they can support the increase in call and internet traffic in a way that facilitates remote work and preserves social connections in the context of physical distance.

- Public and private companies must strengthen their web platforms, telephone answering services and applications so that citizens can resolve basic issues without having to leave their homes
- Remote medical consultations: provide web sites, telephone assistance or applications by health services to provide remote assistance to doctors
- Encourage the home delivery of medicines to deter sick patients from leaving their home
- Virtual transactions (online payments or via telephones) must become more widespread

Street rearrangement

Consider closing specific roads or reducing road or parking space in the city centre so that restaurants, cafés and street vendors can operate safely outdoors complying with physical distancing measures (E.g. Such as what Vilnius is doing in Lithuania)

Data collection & monitoring

Monitoring the various direct and indirect aspects linked to the movement of the population will make it possible to objectively assess the impact of the measures adopted by the Government. This tool will make it possible to adjust, introduce or withdraw measures, to better adapt to each concrete phase of the crisis.

Longer version available in Portuguese:

http://observatoriomt.org.mz/transporte-mobilidade-acessibilidade-covid-19/