WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 13 March 2020. On 22 March 2020, the Government of Mozambique officially declared the first COVID-19 case; despite extensive preventative measures additional cases have steadily been identified.

Concern about the potential spread of COVID-19 in Mozambique was elevated in late March, when according to Mozambique’s National Migration Service (SENAMI) over 14,000 Mozambican migrants returned from South Africa over the Ressano Garcia border, within a span of a few days, as South Africa declared lock-down due to COVID-19.

While screening and contact tracing has been widely carried out, the number of cases in Mozambique passed 100 on 11 May; and as of 26 May, 213 cases of COVID-19 have been identified. While cases were initially clustered in Maputo and Palma areas, new cases have been registered across almost all of Mozambique’s 11 provinces.

Mozambique is on Level 3 Alert since 1 April, including restrictions on gatherings, commercial activity and closure of many border points. Some neighbouring countries have higher COVID-19 cumulative case numbers: over 23,000 in South Africa, over 500 in Tanzania, and over 900 in Zambia, which raises concern near border areas.

IOM aims to contribute to the Government of Mozambique and partners’ preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 to reduce transmission, associated morbidity and mortality and mitigate the impact of the outbreak.

IOM recognizes that preparedness and response plans need to be responsive to population mobility and cross-border dynamics, and that inclusive approaches which take into account migrants, travellers, displaced populations, and local communities are essential in the event of an outbreak.

Efforts are initially focused on preparedness and response, but IOM is responding to the need for mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic by incorporating elements of social cohesion programming throughout.

IOM supports the Government of Mozambique’s COVID-19 response in the areas of coordination, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement, disease surveillance, points of entry, case management and continuity of essential services.

Activities are in line with national and WHO recommendations, the Global HRP, the IASC Interim Guidance on COVID-19, and IOM COVID-19 Global Preparedness and Response Plan.

For more information on IOM response to COVID-19 see:

IOM Southern Africa Regional Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for Coronavirus

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IOM supports national authorities and partners in developing and adjusting contingency plans and enhancing inter-sectoral coordination on COVID-19 preparedness and response in the context of cross-border management, in line with International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005), and the needs of migration-affected communities, including internally displaced persons, while enhancing regional and national disease surveillance, information sharing and reporting.

Specific interventions to date include:

- COVID-19 Preparedness Assessments in Resettlement Sites reports were conducted by IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in collaboration with the Government of Mozambique and the National Disaster Management Agency (INGC) for the central region, Sofala, Manica, Zambezia and Tete, and for northern region sites in Cabo Delgado and Nampula.
- The reports aim to help decision-makers plan interventions as well as recommend health and site preparation measures for outbreak prevention and containment in the resettlement sites that host populations displaced by Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. The two reports cover a total of 76 resettlement sites, which shelter over 100,000 people, and indicated that actions for COVID-19 prevention have been conducted, including installation of hand washing stations and sensitization of residents on prevention measures at the majority of sites. However, there is limited access to health facilities and personal protective equipment and a lack of isolation spaces.

IOM supports Ministry of Health, immigration, border and transportation authorities and partners to enhance preparedness and response at points of entry and along major mobility corridors, including support for national and regional coordination within the country and across borders to support timely health care and referrals.

Specific interventions to date include:

- IOM supported the development of Standard Operating Procedures for ground crossings and airports and a national operational plan for points of entry.
- IOM is supporting the development of a strategy for enhanced screening, tracing and prevention among truck drivers and along major trade corridors in close coordination with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Industry and Trade.
- IOM is conducting outreach to cross-border truck drivers on COVID-19 prevention in Ressano Garcia, on the border with South Africa, and at official and informal crossings in Manica, along the border with Zimbabwe.
- IOM Mozambique is supporting the Government of Mozambique in the reception of returning migrants from South Africa, both regular and irregular, in partnership with the National Institute for Mozambican Communities Abroad (INACE) and involves Mozambique’s National Disaster Management Agency (INGC), Mozambique’s National Migration Service (SENAMI) and Ministry of Health. In May, over 600 returnees received counselling and information on COVID-19 prevention and quarantine measures, and underwent screening and testing for COVID-19, at the Magwaza transit centre in Moamba district, before proceeding with their onward travel to their home communities, mainly in the southern provinces. IOM is also supporting the follow-up of quarantine of these returned migrants in their communities, and the monitoring of any COVID-19 symptoms.
IOM works in close coordination with RCCE counterparts at national and local levels to contribute to awareness and adoption of preventive measures, with a focus on ensuring that migrants and mobile populations have access to timely, context-specific and correct information.

IOM Mozambique is supporting the Ministry of Health in community outreach and dissemination of key COVID-19 prevention messages to migration affected communities across Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane, Sofala, Manica and Cabo Delgado provinces.

Specific interventions to date include:

- In southern provinces (Gaza, Maputo, Inhambane) where Mozambican migrant workers have been returning in the past few weeks following the lockdown in South Africa, IOM community health workers reached out to over 30,000 people, families and relatives of migrant workers, to ensure that they receive correct and tailored COVID-19 prevention and quarantine messages.

- IOM supported the Ministry of Health in crafting messages tailored to recently returned migrant workers and supports community radios to broadcast programs in local languages on prevention of COVID-19 in Tete (Chifunde district), Gaza, Inhambane, Cabo Delgado and Maputo (Moamba district) provinces.

- IOM delivered a total of 6,000 posters and close to 25,000 leaflets on COVID-19 prevention to local health authorities and community-level partners across the provinces of Tete, Maputo, Sofala, Cabo Delgado, Gaza and Inhambane to support awareness raising efforts on key COVID-19 preventive measures.

- IOM ensures that COVID-19 prevention messages are being disseminated to displaced and resettled populations in Sofala, Manica and Cabo Delgado, targeting both displaced families and host communities.

- Over 600 individuals across 20 resettlement sites of Sofala and Manica provinces received sensitization sessions on COVID-19 symptoms, transmission and prevention including, hand washing, preventive hygiene measures and social distancing. 28 activists and traditional birth attendants in 11 resettlement sites in Sofala province were also trained to: disseminate COVID-19 information, track new arrivals, monitor preventive and quarantine measures, conduct community-level awareness, and monitor hand washing stations’ use and maintenance. Megaphones were distributed for the activists to disseminate key COVID-19 messages in local languages.

- IOM Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Teams are supporting displaced and resettled communities, in Sofala and Cabo Delgado provinces, to raise awareness, deliver mental health services, including on coping with stress during the outbreak. Psycho-education activities for children have included the provision of 1,600 activity books with COVID-19 messages at eight resettlement sites in Sofala province.

- IOM integrates COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement into existing programmes on HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in migration affected communities across the SRHR/HIV Knows No Borders project sites in the provinces of Tete, Maputo, and Cabo Delgado.

- In Cabo Delgado province IOM has trained over 170 Community Health Committee members on prevention of COVID-19, in collaboration with an NGO partner. Over 200 change agents, including migrants, young people and sex workers, are being trained and will conduct mobilization activities on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, HIV, and COVID-19.

Young people in Mandruzi resettlement site in Sofala Province read COVID-19 information materials posted by IOM. © IOM, April 2020

IOM teams train site leadership committees in central region resettlement sites on COVID-19 prevention to pass messages on to site residents. © IOM, April 2020
IOM support aims to enhance national level disease surveillance systems with a focus on surveillance capacities at POEs, migration-affected communities and migration corridors, and provision of data on population mobility to inform the investment of public health measures.

Specific interventions to date include:

- In support of Ministry of Health surveillance activities, IOM has mobilized 30 community health workers across the southern provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane to identify and contact migrant workers who recently returned from South Africa, and conduct screening for COVID-19 symptoms, deliver tailored information on quarantine measures and referrals of symptomatic patients to local health authorities. IOM is working in close coordination with local health authorities, migrant worker associations, community leaders and traditional medicine practitioners to locate, screen and inform returned migrants and their relatives. Thus far, community health workers screened over 6,000 migrants and 28,000 family members. Over 80 expressed symptoms and were referred for further assessment by health authorities.

Infection Prevention and Control

IOM supports enhanced national capacity for infection prevention and control with a specific focus on POEs, border communities and displacement settings.

Specific interventions to date include:

- In camp-like settings of central Mozambique, IOM teams provided materials at 20 resettlement sites in Sofala and Manica provinces for the set-up of 600 handwashing stations at select locations in the sites, with 28 more sites planned in the next phase. Demonstration hand washing stations were set-up at each site to provide guidance to community leaders to support ownership to continue the construction efforts. These activities were conducted in close coordination with local health authorities and the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC), simultaneously with risk communication and community engagement activities for impact.

Displacement and Mobility Tracking

IOM supports the government and partners by providing a comprehensive understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on mobility at country and cross-border/inter-regional level through systematic data collection and analysis, needs assessments, as well as continued monitoring of population movements both internal and cross-border, building on the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology.

This includes mapping, monitoring, and analysing the impact of COVID-19 on migrants and other populations of concern whose situation have been affected by the pandemic, ensuring that their needs are considered in the overall response and to inform the medium and longer-term response to the broader socio-economic dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis affecting migrants.

Specific interventions to date include:

- IOM provides continuous overview and analysis of mobility restrictions through monitoring of travel restriction measures, changes in visa regimes, immigration and regularization schemes. This includes DTM publication of a Status of Entry and Exit points map.
- IOM Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Teams are tracking new entries into resettlement sites in Sofala and Manica provinces in coordination with site COVID-19 Committees, to ensure that key prevention and quarantine messages are passed on to new arrivals. In the past few weeks, 90 new arrivals have been registered, all came to join family members. IOM CCCM Teams coordinate with district level health authorities in Buzi and Dombe districts and site committees.
- IOM DTM is supporting the Government of Mozambique in monitoring population movements in Cabo Delgado to inform humanitarian partners’ response. IOM DTM in March and April conducted the first province-wide baseline assessment of internally displaced person (IDP) movements across 17 districts. IOM’s support in mobility and emergency tracking of sudden displacement is important to contribute to epidemiological surveillance efforts.
IOM provides technical and operational support to government and partners to ensure continuity of life-saving primary health care as well as support to infrastructure improvement, especially in humanitarian settings.

Specific interventions to date include:

- IOM is procuring medical tents for Sofala and Cabo Delgado provinces for isolation as contingency
- IOM Mozambique is supporting the Cabo Delgado Provincial and District Health Services to strengthen isolation and treatment centres’ capacity in case of outbreak, in two of the most populous centres of the northern province. In Montepuez district, IOM is upgrading an old health facility to serve as an COVID-19 isolation and treatment centre with a capacity of about 50 beds. IOM is also upgrading a treatment facility in Pemba, the province capital city, in close coordination with partners and the government.
- IOM is strengthening its existing programmes supporting migrants with HIV, TB and SRH testing, care and treatment, to ensure continuum of care in accessible and prioritized sites hosting displaced and resettled populations across Cabo Delgado and Sofala provinces.
- IOM is ensuring that COVID-19 awareness raising, and prevention activities are fully integrated into life-saving interventions for displaced families in Cabo Delgado, such as the distributions of non-food items. Over 600 displaced families in Mecufi and Metuge districts recently received materials for the construction of an Emergency Shelter as well as non-food items. Precautionary measures were implemented throughout distributions including handwashing points, handwashing demonstrations, distancing of beneficiaries and reduced crowd, and messaging via megaphones on COVID-19 prevention practices.

For more information visit: IOM Mozambique webpage: https://mozambique.iom.int

DTM Mozambique webpage: https://displacement.iom.int/mozambique

IOM Mozambique COVID-19 response activities are supported by:

In cooperation with: Government of Mozambique