

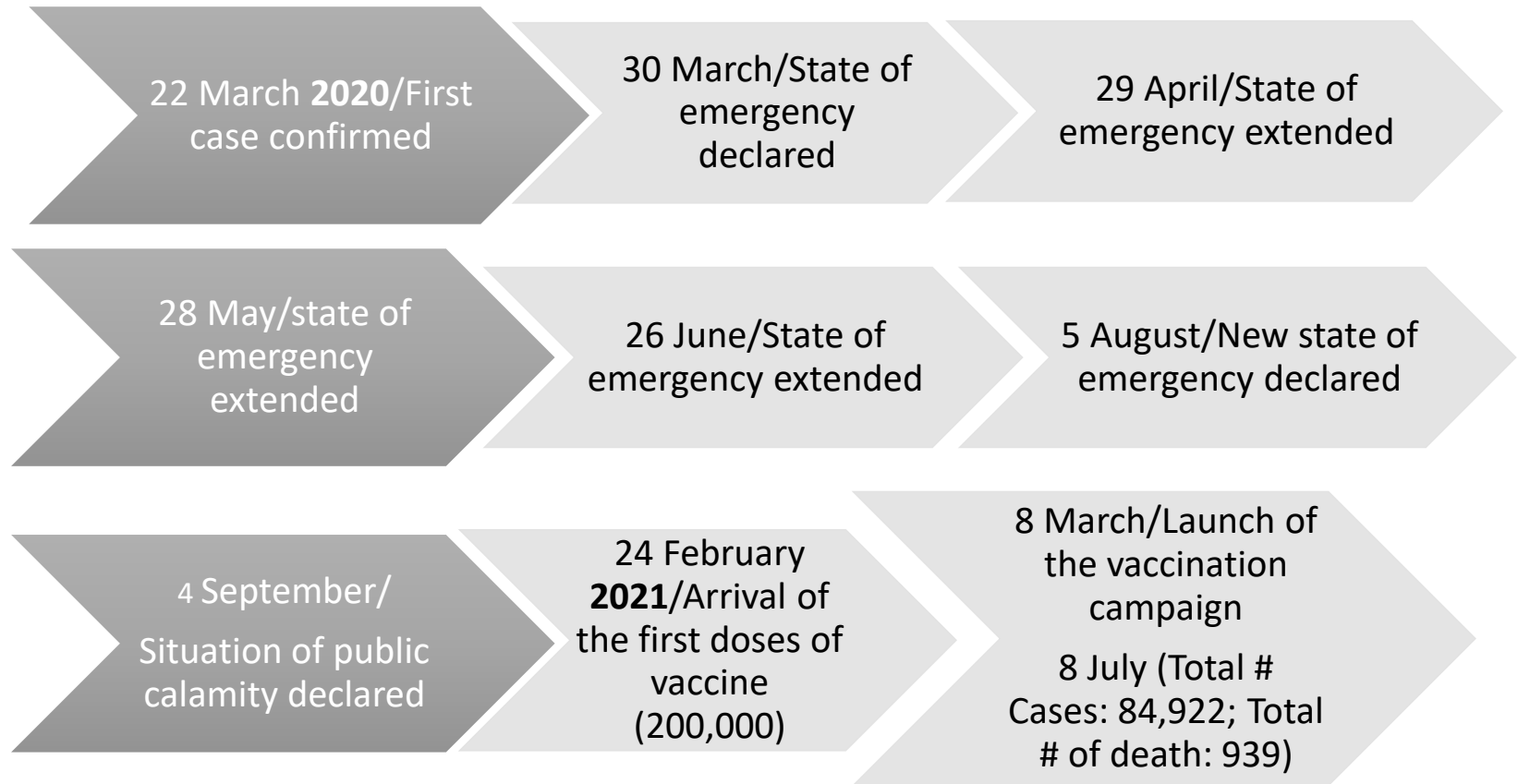
Navigating Civic Space in a Time of COVID-19: Mozambique Findings

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Covid -19 in Mozambique



What is known about the trend of civic space before COVID-19 in the last 10 years?

Despite a favorable Constitution, civil society sector laws and great support from donors in strengthen CSOs:

- Weak role of CSOs to channel and express popular demands;
- Government became increasingly hostile to criticism from public opinion (e.g., “G-40” linked to the ruling party).

“One of the virtual observatory panel members said that this issue of closing the civic space, we have verified for a long time. Of course, because when we talk about opening up the civic space, we are saying that civil society and other groups have the right to freedom of expression, the right to association and assembly, among others. And what we have seen in the last few years is that this is not happening strictly. There are restrictions on laws, as mentioned in the law of associations, many media professionals to be threatened and some history of aggression. Regarding civil society, [another member of the virtual observation panel] spoke several times. She said that it is difficult for us to have meetings, marches and speak as we intend (...)”
(Intervention by member of the virtual observation panel, in the second session of the panel, Maputo, 30 July 2020).

- [illegible]

"I have noticed that organizations are doing a kind of "win-win", doing the following: we intervene a little in this Covid issue, we support government authorities so that we can have space on the ground to do our actions, which are linked to the mandate of each of the organizations, that is, we support with Kits for Covid, we support with group communication. At MISAU, I have seen many CSOs that are part of and support with ideas, pamphlets, initiatives to combat Covid. And they end up creating free mini-access to do their actions. It is an entry point because it is not easy. Everything is now closed. Authorizations are not given because of Covid. Organizations cannot carry out their actions because the country is about to resolve Covid, extreme violence. So it was really closed. So, the organizations created this intervention strategy, partly in support of the government, to fight covid, but also to have a little space to intervene in the field as if it had a partnership with the government. I think it's working like this ". (Intervention by member of the virtual observation panel, spoke at the fifth session of the panel, Maputo, 29 October 2020)

But ...There are some variations due to:

- Geographical differences regarding the closure of civic space;
 - Armed conflict affected zones (northern and central regions) vs non affected zones;
 - Rural areas vs urban areas.
- Unequal distribution of resources (financial, material and human);
 - Maputo based organizations vs local (province & district) based organizations;
 - Power relations among CSO reproduce regional imbalances & inequalities

"(...) I speak on behalf of CSOs, mainly because of the limitations we have here because of displacement. We can no longer go to the northern part of Cabo Delgado because of conflicts as colleagues know. And also, for what is our job, there has to be all that bureaucracy. Inform what we came to do, who we are going to work with, what the approach is, we want to see the texts, who you are. And when it comes to inquiries, the government itself does a thorough and point-to-point screening, which exactly they are going to ask. Not long ago, there was an organization to carry out a survey on the issue of violence against women and girls, but when the government realized it was civil society, yes, but when it realized it was "X" Cabo Delgado, who were the activists of "X" that they were going to work, that, the program was totally cut. "X" activists cannot work there, "X" cannot work on this (...)".
(Intervention by member of the virtual observation panel, in the second session of the panel, Maputo 30 July 2020)



Source: DW, 2020 ([Link](#)).

What are the implications for governance?

- Increasing political inequalities and violence;
 - The closure of civic space affects the access to political participation.
- Fragmentation and weakening of civil society.
 - While some organisations are co-opted and enjoy support from the government, others are stigmatised.



Source: MMO, 2020 ([Link](#)).



Source: WhatsApp, 2020.



Source: DW, 2020 ([Link](#)).

Thank You!

- Pereira, C. and Forquilha, S. (2021) 'Navigating Civic Space in a Time of COVID-19: Mozambique Country Report', Maputo: Institute for Social and Economic Studies. Access:
<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/16570>