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Health minister calls for "culture of humanism"

Health Minister Ivo Garrido on 12 July reaffirmed the need to fight against all forms of disrespect for patients, insensitivity and carelessness that still occur in Mozambican health units. Speaking at the opening of a meeting of his Ministry's Hospital Council, Garrido stressed that hospitals are not places to dump sick people. Instead, they must be characterised by a culture of humanism and of respect for the patients and those accompanying them.

"Although improvement can be noted in some hospitals", he added, "there are still complaints in all the provinces of poor attendance, disrespect and even illicit charges".

There were also complaints of long waiting times both to schedule an appointment or operation, and to be attended on the date fixed for the consultation. There were occasions when patients waited for four hours or longer, even though they had made an appointment. Garrido warned that this discredited the health service in the eyes of the users.

"Good performance by health workers, good quality of services provided, humanism, courtesy and polite behaviour should be guaranteed to all users of our hospitals", he stressed.

The Hospital Council discussed how to implement the "Plan of Action for Humanising Health Care". It also discussed the quality of medical and nursing activities, and the functioning of hospital pharmacies, laboratories, and x-ray units. However, it also looked at other areas that are critical for the well-being of patients such as hospital diets and kitchens, and hospital laundry facilities.

Garrido stressed the need to study ways of improving the food and clothing provided for patients.

Maintenance of hospital buildings and equipment was a further key issue. Inefficient, and sometimes non-existent, maintenance, Garrido noted, led to the decay of the physical infrastructure of hospitals, and to avoidable breakdowns of machinery.

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Maputo provincial hospital ready next year

Work on building the Maputo Provincial Hospital, in the southern city of Matola, is well advanced, and should be concluded in 2011.

Health Minister, Ivo Garrido, speaking to reporters in Matola on 10 July said that the original deadline for completing the hospital was April 2011. He admitted that the construction was running behind schedule, but was confident that the hospital would be completed in 2011.

Matola is the only one of the provincial capitals that does not already possess a provincial hospital. The result is increased pressure on hospitals in Maputo city, notably the Maputo Central Hospital and the Jose Macamo Hospital.

The Maputo Provincial Directorate of Health is now working to recruit staff for the new hospital. According to Health Director Cremilde Anli, public tenders have been launched to recruit 250 ancillary staff. Doctors and nurses, however, will be allocated to the hospital by the Ministry of Health.

When complete, the hospital will have 400 beds, three operating theatres, a laboratory, and a morgue. It will offer the full range of medical services to patients.

The hospital has a budget of $9.5 million – $7 million for construction, and $2.5 million for acquiring and assembling equipment.

The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) has financed the hospital with a loan of $4 million, the OPEC fund has provided $5 million, and the Mozambique state itself is providing $500,000.

Anli said the new hospital will relieve the pressure on the Maputo City hospitals and will offer better care to the 1.2 million people living in Maputo province.

Decision soon on use of Zambezi for coal exports

The question of whether coal mined in the western province of Tete can be exported by shipping it in barges down the Zambezi River will be decided within the next two months, according to the National Director of Mines, Eduardo Alexandre.

Logistics is the major problem for the coal companies, since currently the only option is the Sena railway line that runs from the Moatize coal basin in Tete to the port of Beira.

The Sena line does not have the capacity to carry all the coal to be mined by the concessions granted to the Brazilian company Vale and to Riversdale Mining of Australia.

"The data we have indicate that the current capacity of the line is around six million tonnes a year", said Alexandre. But within two years the production from the Vale and Riversdale mines could reach eight million tonnes.

Decisions are urgently needed about other options, notably the use of the Zambezi.

The medium term option is to build an entirely new railway from Moatize, across southern Malawi, to link up with Mozambique's northern corridor, to the port of Nacala. This should be taken very seriously, said Alexandre, "because Nacala has excellent conditions for the export of coal. It is a deep water port, it can receive very large ships, and it has no dredging costs. The forecast is that this railway could be ready in five years".

Vale has been enthusiastic about a new railway, but Alexandre warned that the Brazilians were mistaken if they thought they could exclude their competitors from such a line. Mozambican law will not allow that.

"Even if a company invests in an infrastructure, it cannot use it exclusively. That is inadmissible", he said. "There are obviously forms of compensation for the fact that the company has made an investment, but it has to make the line available for other operators".

Alexandre said that the known coal reserves in the Moatize basin amount to around 23 billion tonnes. It was economically viable to exploit about 70 per cent of this. But not all the basin has been explored, and so Alexandre expected the numbers to rise.

The president of the Mozambican Coal Development Association, Casimiro Francisco, has suggested that coal production could reach an annual figure of 50 million tonnes by 2015 and 120 million tonnes by 2020. Alexandre thought this was reasonable enough as a basic forecast, but warned that the figures could easily prove to be out by 30 per cent in either direction.

Vale interested in Nampula phosphates

Vale has expressed an interest in exploiting phosphate deposits in the northern province of Nampula. According to the National Director of Mines, Eduardo Alexandre, Vale has already undertaken some exploration to ascertain the size of the deposits, and was pleased with the results.

Vale plans to submit a project for a viability study to the government. That study will begin in 2011, with the mining of phosphates possibly starting in 2014.

Alexandre did not put a figure on the size of the projected Vale investment in Nampula phosphates – but said it could be larger than the investment in the Tete coal deposits.

Mining phosphates must be done with great care to avoid the heavy metals (such as cadmium and lead) which often occur in phosphate deposits from leaching into ground or surface water.

Joint venture for Changara manganese

The London-based mining company Baobab Resources has announced a joint venture between its Mozambican subsidiary, Capitol Resources, and the Australian company Southern Iron, to develop its base metal and manganese mine in Changara district, in the western province of Tete.

Southern Iron will invest $1.5 million in the project in two stages in exchange for a 50 per cent stake. A Baobab releases says that further investment "to bring discoveries to pre-feasibility status" will raise Southern Iron's stake to 65 per cent.

Southern Iron will then have an option to fund definitive feasibility studies, which will give it an 80 per cent stake in the Changara project.

According to Baobab's managing director, Ben James, "The signing of the agreement with Southern Iron has established a firm foundation from which we will be able to rapidly assess and develop the Changara project. We look forward to working with the Southern Iron team in exploring this exciting corner of Mozambique."

Under this agreement Southern Iron is obliged to invest $300,000 over 12 months to fund an initial work programme at Changara. The second phase involves further investment of $1.2 million over 18 months. At that point, Southern Iron takes its 50 per cent stake in the project.

Baobab has four exploration licences in Changara, covering an area of 525 square kilometres, near the border with Zimbabwe. Baobab undertook a soil geochemistry survey over about 70% of the project area in 2008, which indicated the presence of lead, zinc, manganese and copper.

Chibuto heavy sands seeks investors

The Mozambican government is to make a further attempt to interest investors in the huge deposit of titanium bearing heavy mineral sands at Chibuto, in the southern province of Gaza.

The Chibuto mining concession, known as Corridor Sands, was originally granted to the Australian company Western Mining, which was then acquired by BHP-Billiton.

Tests were carried out, and last year BHP-Billiton announced that it did not possess the technology required to process the Chibuto sands. The chemical make-up of the Chibuto deposit is different from that of the mineral sands at Moma, in the northern province of Nampula, which are being exploited by the Irish company Kenmare.

The tests at Chibuto found a high percentage of chromium, which dictates a different technology than that used at Moma. BHP-Billiton asked for an additional two years, while it sought to develop the appropriate technology – but the government thought this was excessive and cancelled the concession.

According to the National Director of Mines, Eduardo Alexandre, the government intends to launch an international public tender within the next two months, inviting investors to bid for the Chibuto mining rights.

Under the original design of the project, the investment envisaged was over $1 billion. Construction of the mine and processing plant would have created 1,750 jobs. Once the project was operational it would employ 450 people.

A further difficulty is electricity. Southern Africa is short of power for major new industrial projects, and Corridor Sands is unlikely to start production until new sources of power come on stream, such as the Mpanda Nkuwa dam on the Zambezi.

Mozambique and Botswana to build new port and railway

The governments of Mozambique and Botswana signed a memorandum of understanding on 16 July to develop a deep water port at Techobanine point, in Mozambique's southernmost district of Matutuine.

Besides building a port to receive bulk mineral ships, oil tankers and passenger vessels, the project also involves a new 1,100 kilometre railway linking Techobanine to Botswana, and passing through Zimbabwe.

The document was signed, in Techobanine by Mozambican Transport Minister Paulo Zucula, and his Botswanan counterpart, Frank Ramsden.

Speaking during the presentation of the project , Adelino Mesquita, the Chief Executive Officer of Mozambique's port and rail company, CFM, said that the budget for studies and for the construction of the port and railway is estimated at around $7 billion.

The preparatory phase, including the mobilisation of finance, should be completed by the end of 2011, and construction is due to begin in 2012.

Paulo Zucula told the ceremony that the memorandum of understanding marks the rebirth of a dream for a deep water port in Matutuine that dates from the 1960s. The original site for such a port was Dobela Point, but it has been shifted to Techobanine largely for environmental reasons.

For his part, Ramsden declared that the memorandum marks an important stage in strengthening the relations of cooperation between the two countries.

According to Taolo Sebonego, the chairperson of the Botswana rail company, with the country's current dependence on South African ports, it takes up to 22 days for merchandise to arrive, be unloaded and reach its destination. He expected the new port and railway to reduce this period to an average of just six days.

The main cargo expected to use the new port is coal from Botswana. The country has an estimated 212 billion tonnes of coal reserves. Using Techobanine would free Botswana from dependence on the South African ports of Durban and Richard Bay.

New Zambezi bridge will not burden state budget

The new bridge over the Zambezi River at Benga will not be a burden on the state budget, according to the chairperson of the government's Road Fund, Francisco Pereira.

The new bridge at Benga, about six kilometres downstream from the existing Samora Machel Bridge, which carries the Malawi-Zimbabwe road into the heart of Tete city, will be operated by a consortium of Portuguese and Mozambican companies, and the cost of the bridge will be recovered through a toll gate.

This consortium consists of the Portuguese companies Soares da Costa and Ascendi (which each hold 40 per cent), and the Mozambican company Infra-Engineering (20 per cent). Among the partners in Infra-Engineering are Tourism Minister Fernando Sumbana, former defence minister Tobias Dai, and Raimundo Pachinuapa, a former guerrilla commander in the war for Mozambican independence.

The new bridge will relieve the current pressure on the Samora Machel Bridge. Between 500 and 600 trucks a day use the bridge, and traffic is growing at 2.5 per cent a year. Long queues frequently build up, since only one heavy vehicle is allowed on the bridge at a time.

The bridge at Benga, built in reinforced concrete will be much stronger.

As a result, trucks will no longer thunder through the middle of Tete city, with the enormous damage that they cause to the city roads.

The consortium will run the Benga bridge for 20 years, with a possible extension for a further ten. Pereira calculated that during this period the consortium will pay the state $306 million in taxes.

Second governance and corruption survey launched

The Mozambican government's Public Sector Reform Technical Unit (UTRESP) on 20 July announced the launch of the second National Survey on Governance and Corruption. This is six years after the first such survey, held in 2004, and it will use the same methodology in order to ensure that the results are comparable.

UTRESP General Director, Carlos Natividade, told reporters that the survey will be divided into three segments – households, companies and public employees. The size of the household sample should cover about 2,500 households, of whom around 1,000 should be users of public services.

500 companies will be surveyed, and 1,000 public employees, including people working for the central government, for local and municipal governments, and for the judicial system.

The tender for carrying out the survey was won by the International Strategic Studies Centre (CEEI), which is part of the Higher Institute of International Relations (ISRI). The cost of the survey is about $500,000, to come from the donor-supported common fund for the Public Sector Reform.

Natividade hoped that comparison between this and the 2004 survey will show the impact that reforms in the public sector have had on citizens' perceptions of the state apparatus and of corruption.

Since the 2004 survey, he said, there had been major improvements in financial and asset management through the computerized state financial management system, e-SISTAFE. Procedures have been simplified, notably through the "Single Counters" where all the relevant documents and information from citizens seeking licences or authorizations are available.

The disciplinary power of the state has been strengthened, he added, insisting "there is no impunity in the public administration". Internal controls have been boosted through the audit body, the General Inspectorate of Finance (IGF), and through the State Administrative Inspectorate (IGA), which checks the legality of administrative acts.

Anti-corruption legislation is now being reviewed, said Natividade, including provisions of conflict of interests, and the obligation of senior figures in the state to declare their assets. Currently these declarations are made annually and delivered to the Constitutional Council, which is forbidden from making them public. The major debate on this issue is whether the secrecy should be scrapped and the declarations of assets made available for public scrutiny.

The survey will be held from July to December. The government will receive the survey report in December, and Natividade expected it to be made public in January 2011.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

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Health agreements with Brazil

The Mozambican and Brazilian governments on 16 July in Maputo signed two agreements on health care, budgeted at $1 million. One agreement is for a project to prevent and control cancer, while the second will set up a pilot community therapy project.

The agreements were signed by Health Minister Ivo Garrido and Brazilian ambassador Antonio de Sousa e Silva.

Speaking immediately after the ceremony, Garrido said that community therapy is a pioneering mental health project, which will give communities powers to solve by themselves certain mental health questions without needing to resort to hospitals.

"We all know about the tensions we experience that arise from situations such as unemployment, losing a wife or husband, or drug addiction", he said. "The current trend is to resort to hospitals, but these are problems that can be solved at community level".

To implement this project a group of 60 Mozambicans will be trained by Brazilians in Maputo, and in Nampula and Zambezia provinces. The Mozambican staff will then train the communities.

For Garrido, this refusal to medicalise social problems will strengthen the self-confidence of the public in solving some health problems they face.

The other agreement, the Minister said, will improve the capacity to prevent and treat cancer, and will endow Mozambican professionals with recognised scientific knowledge in this field.

"Today cancer kills many more people in the world than diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria", Garrido pointed out. "Mozambique is also on that path, and we have to prepare ourselves now rather than later".

The cancer training programmes will take place in Brazil. It is hoped that they will lead to improvements in screening for cancer and in recording cases.

Policemen arrested for extortion

Five Mozambican policemen have been arrested and charged with extortion and bribe taking.

Speaking to reporters in Maputo on 13 July, national police spokesman Pedro Cossa, said that two of the policemen, whom he named only as Lucas and Jose, were arrested for accepting a bribe of 7,000 meticais (about $200) to allow illegal immigrants to pass a checkpoint unhindered.

Cossa said the two men took the bribe to allow 16 Somali migrants to cross the Ligonha River, which separates the provinces of Nampula and Zambezia. The Somalis were heading south from Nampula.

The other three policemen were arrested for extorting money from a group of South African tourists. They stopped the tourists' cars in downtown Maputo "and invented an excuse to charge them 1,000 rands (about $130)", said Cossa. However, the tourists complained at a police station, and gave enough information to allow the three corrupt policemen to be identified. They are now facing both disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

"Their career in the police force is finished", declared Cossa. He said the police General Command will not tolerate extortion, and urged other citizens to follow the South Africans' example and denounce any policemen who behave in this way.

Slow road maintenance annoys Governor

The slow pace of maintaining the main roads through the central province of Sofala has infuriated the interim provincial governor, Carvalho Muaria.

The roads in question are the main north-south highway (EN1) and the Beira-Zimbabwe (EN6). In both cases, maintenance is in the hands of the Mozambican company CETA.

The road to Zimbabwe is in particularly poor condition between Dondo and Nhamatanda. This stretch needs regular maintenance because it is often flooded by the Pungue River during the rainy season. As for EN1, potholes have reappeared on the stretch from the Inchope crossroads in Manica province to Caia in Sofala, on the south bank of the Zambezi.

Muaria, who is also Deputy Public Works Minister, is standing in for Mauricio Vieira, who is ill.

SADC Early Warning Centre inaugurated

President Armando Guebuza on 12 July in Gaborone inaugurated the Regional Early Warning Centre of SADC (Southern African Development Community), which will help the organization's member states detect any signs of crises, conflicts or natural disasters.

In his capacity as chairperson of the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, President Guebuza said that with this centre, the region has taken an important step towards strengthening mechanisms to prevent, manage and solve conflicts.

Speaking during the inauguration ceremony, President Guebuza said that the centre enshrines the role of peace and stability in the region as factors that drive development. "Today we can congratulate ourselves on the fact that now we have a system that will allow us to detect signs of different types of threat, before they become real", he said.

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