



# NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT: LESSONS FROM NAIROBI, MOMBASA AND KISUMU

Pedestrians crossing along Lungalunga Road, Nairobi. © CDKN

## ISSUE 1: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT ON NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT

*Non-Motorized Transport (NMT): Lessons from Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu* is a **four-part newsletter series covering public awareness and engagement, building partnerships with the private sector and public transport actors, sustainable financing and political successions**. It builds on the recommendations from previous newsletters,<sup>1</sup> which examined the NMT experience in Nairobi. These newsletters culminated in a study,<sup>2</sup> *'Promoting Non-Motorized Transport in Nairobi, A Study on Users, Safety and Infrastructure Trends'*, officially adopted by Nairobi Metropolitan Services (NMS) as a reference guide in June 2021.

As part of the efforts to implement the recommendations from the NMT study, NMS, in partnership with the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), organized

**peer learning forums among Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa** city officials in September 2021 and October 2021. Representatives from the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) and the Kenya Urban Roads Authority were present, as these agencies are essential in securing NMT safety and improving infrastructure. These peer exchanges were informed by the commendable gains that the three cities have made on NMT and provided the opportunity for city officials to share best practices and explore solutions for advancing NMT.

This **four-part series draws on the outcomes<sup>3</sup> of the peer learning forums**, which have been useful in supporting several NMT stakeholders – such as city officials, road agencies, political leaders, civil society organizations and residents' associations – to develop NMT networks that meet the needs of the people.

## WHERE WE ARE

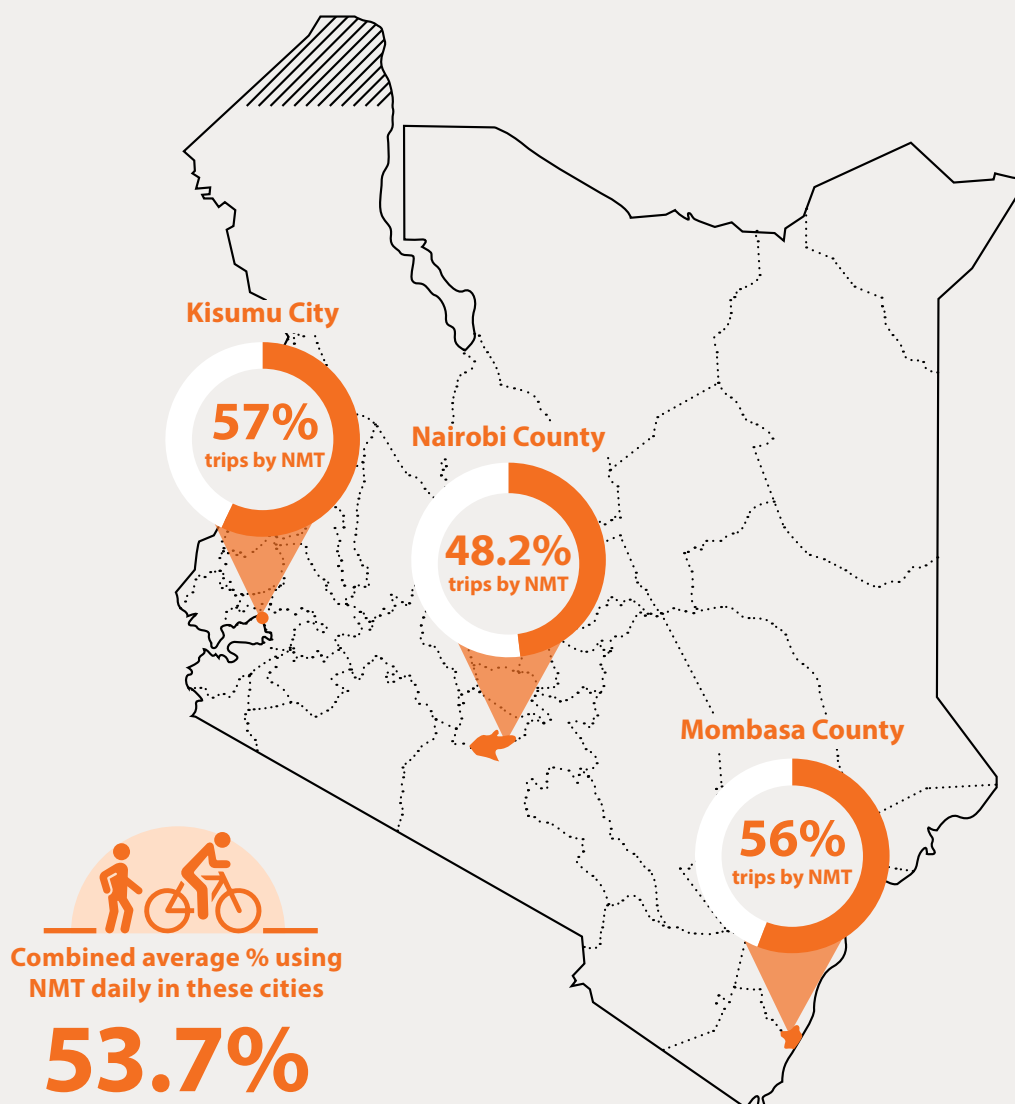
In this first issue on 'public awareness and engagement on NMT', we examine the public's interaction with NMT, the challenges faced by key stakeholders (such as road agencies) while engaging with the public on NMT and how to address them, as well as the recommendations for improving public engagements and awareness campaigns around the topic of NMT.

The socio-economic needs, user preferences and behavioral patterns of the public are crucial to determining transport networks. A foremost step is to understand the current trends in Kenya's major cities: Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa. **These cities have high volumes of pedestrians, with a combined average of 53.7% of daily trips made by NMT.**<sup>4</sup> The numbers confirm that much of the population closely interacts with NMT for their daily needs, and even those using motorized means of transport must take into consideration the large walking and growing cycling populations.

A central challenge is the general public perception that **NMT is a lowly means of transport**, reserved for the poor, while cars and highways are associated with affluence and status. For example, during *barazas* in Mombasa, residents from low-income neighborhoods often ask their leaders to build roads, despite not owning vehicles themselves and relying solely on NMT for their daily movement.<sup>5</sup>

**This mismatch of needs is not only a poor use of financial resources, but can even endanger lives.** In one instance, within days after the completion of a new road in a low-income neighborhood in Nairobi, three traffic injuries occurred. The road had been built on the insistence of the residents, who had rejected a wide footpath proposal. Since they were unaccustomed to a high frequency of motorized vehicle traffic, and children were accustomed to playing on the paths, the new road has become not only a risk, but also discourages the vibrant street life they previously enjoyed.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1: Percentage of NMT users in Kenya's major cities**





The perception of NMT as being inferior has resulted in **poor public awareness of the rights of NMT users and improper usage of NMT facilities**. While observing Nairobi's busiest and most dangerous corridors, the following trends were noted:

- **A lack of adequate NMT facilities** and, where present, the minimum design guidelines (such as accessibility for persons with disabilities, adequate width and street lighting) were often not met.
- **The rampant encroachment** of NMT facilities by motorists, including boda-bodas, and vendors.
- Pedestrians **running while crossing roads**, signaling a 'trespasser' mentality where pedestrians do not feel that they share equal user rights with other road users.
- Pedestrians **crossing the road at non-designated zones**.
- **Speeding** of motorists on carriageways adjacent to NMT corridors.

- **Illegal pick-up and drop-off** of passengers at non-designated zones.
- **Garbage** thrown on footpaths and clogged drains.

These trends reveal the following regarding the mindset and the level of public awareness on NMT:

1. Low awareness on the **rights of NMT users** to have safe and designated facilities, free from encroachment by motorists and vendors.
2. Low awareness about **sharing the road** among all road users, contributing to widespread speeding and pedestrians running while crossing roads.
3. Low user education on the **proper use of road facilities and traffic rules**, contributing to the crossing, picking-up and dropping-off at non-designated zones.



Encroachment of footpaths by vendors along Ring Road. © CDKN



Clogged drain along Muigai Kenyatta Road. © CDKN



Garbage along Outer Ring Road. © CDKN



Illegal pick-up and drop-off on Outer Ring Road. © CDKN

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON NMT

Having examined the current trends on public perception and awareness regarding NMT, this section proposes recommendations to help navigate the challenges faced while engaging the public on NMT matters.

### Building trust with the public

Establishing trust is a crucial first step while engaging with the public on NMT. **Understanding the target audience** is important. Their age, gender, education, income, culture and physical environment are key factors. These factors should guide the location, content, format and language of the message. The following are key steps in the process of building trust:



**Go to the grassroots.** Though neighborhoods within a city share similarities, every locality has unique realities. Often, **public participation forums in Nairobi are held at the sub-county level, where several wards are combined.**<sup>9</sup>

This encourages the generalization of needs and solutions, which may not in fact be suited to a particular neighborhood. There is a **need for public participation forums to be held at a more local level, such as the ward and village levels**, to contextualize the needs of a particular area.

For example, Starehe sub-county includes Pangani, Ziwani or Kariokor, Landimawe, Nairobi South, Hospital, and the Central Business District (CBD) wards. A public participation forum was held in Kariakor and it was very challenging to have focused discussions, since **each ward has very different concerns and interests, even on matters related to NMT.**<sup>10</sup> The CBD ward, for example, is more interested in the impact that NMT has on businesses, while those in neighborhoods are more interested in safety and connectivity.

In Kisumu, public participation has been encouraged beyond the sub-county and ward levels, all the way down to the village unit. This is an exemplary practice supported by the adoption of the **Kisumu County Administration Village Units Act.**<sup>11</sup> Other counties should also encourage public participation beyond the ward level and adopt legislative frameworks that guide deeper public participation. These approaches offer a more contextualized response to the public's needs on NMT.



**Take advantage of existing structures of influence.**

Leveraging the current organization of a community can not only **save resources** while undertaking public engagement, but also **increase the chances of acceptance** of the message. For example, in Mombasa and Nairobi, road agencies and county officials sometimes **collaborate with political and opinion leaders to influence their constituents on the benefits of NMT.**

This has been particularly effective where sensitive exercises, such as acquisition of land for NMT or enforcement against encroachment, are involved.<sup>12</sup>

Other influential structures that are often under-utilized include **residents' associations and community radio stations.** For example, Mukuru informal settlement is a Special Planning Zone where the government is investing significant resources to address the living conditions, including NMT connectivity. Ruben FM is a community radio station in Mukuru, broadcasting within a three-kilometer radius. It aims to empower and unite the residents of Mukuru through education, information and entertainment.<sup>13</sup> Such platforms, which already enjoy goodwill from the community, can offer productive avenues to engage the public on NMT.



**Dress and talk appropriately.** First impressions often go a long way, and one's **manner of dress and language of address** are crucial. For example, many residents from low-income neighborhoods are more comfortable expressing themselves in Swahili, Kenya's national language. Addressing them in English **creates a barrier to open communication and does not enhance trust.**

In addition, one's mode of dress may often seem insignificant. However, even **attire should appeal to the status (age, income, occupation, religious beliefs) of the person being addressed.** For example, wearing a business suit to speak to an audience of blue-collar workers would not be appropriate and, by drawing attention to status and hierarchy, could create a communication barrier.

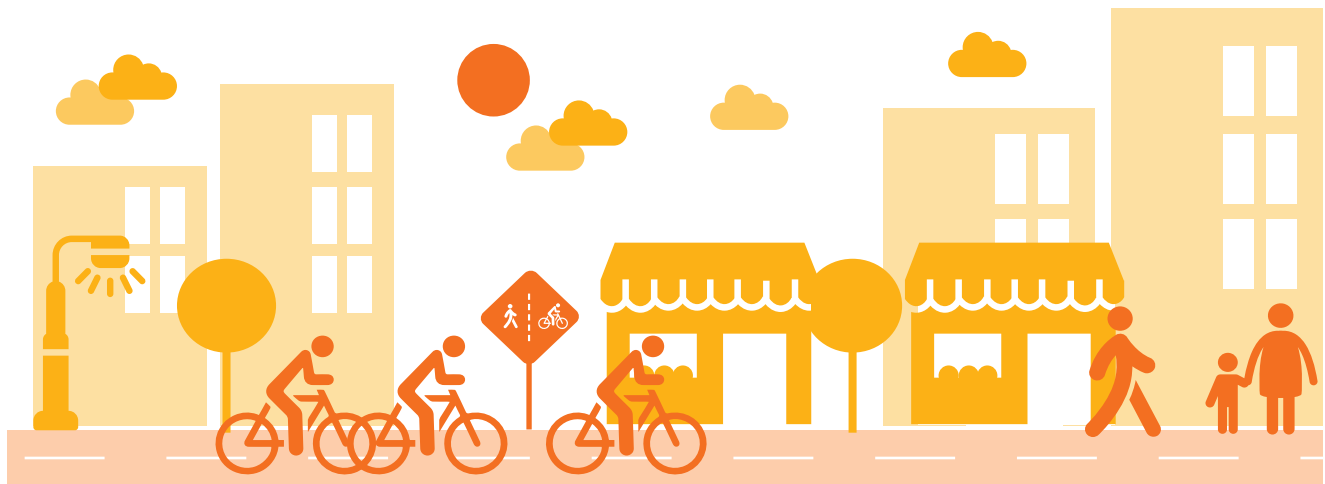


**Have patience and listen.** Public engagement is a **continuous and sustained effort**, until the desired outcomes are achieved. It is important to recognize that shifting attitudes and changing behaviors take time. **Listening to the needs of the people** rather than advancing preconceived messages and solutions is important.<sup>14</sup> It allows for genuine engagement, where the public feels consulted. It fosters a sense of ownership that NMT facilities are a public good<sup>15</sup> and offers an opportunity to **co-create sustainable solutions on NMT.**



**Be sensitive to immediate needs.** Almost 60% of the population in Nairobi dwells in informal settlements,<sup>16</sup> with tough living conditions. These residents are a big part of the public engagement audience. It is important to **present the NMT message in a way that recognizes and advances solutions to immediate needs.** For example, more members of the public will find the cost-savings from reduced commuter fares and the socio-economic vibrancy of walkable areas more appealing, rather than the health benefits of using NMT whereas the health benefit of NMT is one that the middle-class residents will resonate with more, compared to the cost-savings accruing from NMT.





## Increasing awareness on the importance of NMT

Once trust has been built, the next step is to educate and build awareness on NMT. This involves highlighting its benefits, educating users and enforcing traffic rules. Assuming the target group has already been identified and trust has been built, the following are some of the factors to consider while undertaking public education on NMT:



**Capitalize on the benefits of NMT:** Depending on the audience, what factors can we focus on while engaging the public on NMT?



**Cost-savings:** Well-designed NMT networks that provide improved access to socio-economic activities offer opportunities for the public to save costs on commuter fares. Reduced transport costs, particularly for low-income residents, can significantly ease financial constraints on families while allowing them to meet other pressing needs.



**Improving socio-economic opportunities:**

Emphasizing the role of NMT in increasing opportunities for economic development is important. For example, this includes sensitizing the public on how NMT can not only boost small and large businesses by increasing foot traffic and social vibrancy along the streets, but also help improve security.



**Health benefits:** The fact that NMT promotes active lifestyles, which can reduce the dangers of sedentary living, is a selling point. Additionally, we can remind the public that many of our cities have poor air quality, which negatively affects our health, and illustrate how NMT, being a zero-carbon form of transport, helps to reduce air pollution.



**Environmental benefits:** Besides helping to improve air quality for health reasons, one can also mention that NMT plays a role in addressing the climate crisis, since it promotes a zero-carbon mobility option.



**Have the right tools for engagement:** Sub-county administrators involved in public participation and engagement forums in Nairobi have noted that there are often inadequate financial and skilled human resources dedicated to public engagement. This results in poor preparation and suboptimal outcomes.<sup>17</sup> Below are some recommendations for how to optimize public engagements on NMT:



**Be prepared:** Public engagement, like any other forum, needs adequate preparation. This includes a focused agenda developed with the relevant stakeholders, an appropriate venue and materials, and conducting the engagement in a timely manner.



**Use skilled facilitators:** Engagement is a skill, and often the responsibility of facilitating is left to sub-county and ward administrators. Though these administrators play a central role in mobilizing the community, they need support with facilitation. Using skilled facilitators to assist in public awareness and education on NMT is essential.<sup>18</sup> This allows for the message to be presented in a way that is best suited to the audience and, most importantly, for the audience to feel heard and included in the outcomes. There is also an opportunity to build the skills of sub-county and ward administrators with basic NMT knowledge and facilitation capacity, to enhance their role in public engagement on NMT.



**Use data to support your message:** When engaging with the public, the use of current and credible data

helps build trust in the messages about NMT. For example, 66.2% of all traffic fatalities in Nairobi are NMT users, translating to more than 330 lives lost annually.<sup>19</sup> This makes for a more powerful message compared to only stating that pedestrians are the most vulnerable road users. Similarly, public awareness campaigns on road safety often focus on women, children and persons with disabilities. However, 88.3% of all traffic fatalities in Nairobi are men.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, many of them are young men between the ages of 20 to 40.<sup>21</sup> These are examples of how data can guide and strengthen messages on NMT.



**Include technical officers:** It has been noted that during public engagement forums, there is a lack of interest from county technical personnel, especially the senior officers who have the power to influence policy and budgetary changes on NMT.<sup>22</sup> Technical personnel are best suited to explain some of the finer details on NMT to the public. These officers are not obligated to attend these forums and often send junior officers who have little decision-making authority. Junior officers are important to the discussions. However, they need to be accompanied by senior officers who make decisions, have much more experience with the issues being discussed and, hence, can contribute effectively to the discussions. The sub-county and ward administrators have called upon the county transport departments to build strong working relationships with them to navigate these challenges related to accessing officials.<sup>23</sup>



**Include enforcement officers:** Enforcement officers need to attend these forums so that they can understand the behavioral attitudes of users. During these forums, they can dig deeper into some of the reasons that lead to encroachment of NMT facilities, speeding, crossing, and pick-up and

drop-off at non-designated zones. It has been noted that when some key stakeholders are not part of the conversations, sub-county administrators can only forward the feedback from the forums, and this method has not been effective in addressing the concerns from the public. This leads to frustration among the public and consequently a sense of distrust of authorities becomes entrenched.<sup>24</sup>

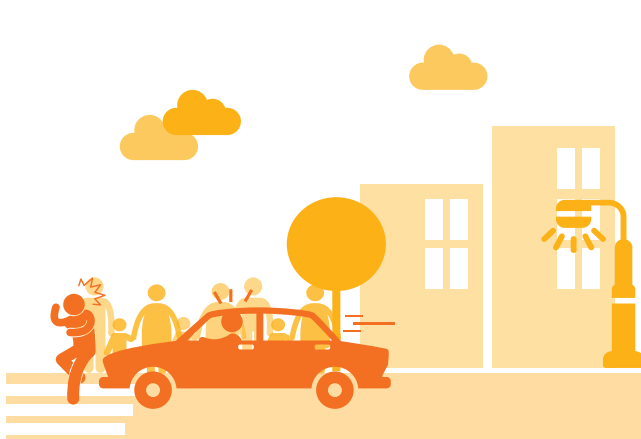


**Be creative:** Beyond the conventional public engagement forums, theatre, song, dance and technology such as mobile phone applications and hotlines can support public engagement on NMT. For example, *Zusha!*,<sup>25</sup> a road safety campaign, includes messages on saving lives inside Public Service Vehicles and hotlines for the public to report the breach of traffic rules by public transport operators and other members of the public.

## Shifting behavioral attitudes towards NMT

Changing the perception that NMT is a lowly means of transport as opposed to a convenient, healthy and clean means of mobility, is a long-term effort. This involves unlearning misconceptions and embracing new ways of thinking. One of the most effective ways of shifting behavior is starting at a personal level and being the change you want to see. Many advocates of NMT often avoid using it because they prefer the comforts of motorization and are concerned about anticipated negative perceptions from others. However, emphasizing that cars are just a means of mobility that can complement NMT, and not a sign of status, is particularly important.

Furthermore, public opinion and political leaders can play a significant role in influencing their constituents. For example, the Nairobi County Women Representative has often been spotted cycling to the County Assembly.<sup>26</sup> If we encourage more leaders to start using NMT, it will support the shift in perception away from NMT being a lowly means of transport.



## The law is your friend

There are many challenges faced while engaging the public, such as governance, budgetary constraints and vested interests. Remembering that public participation is a right of the people provided for under the Constitution of Kenya,<sup>27</sup> which vests power to the people, can help navigate the obstacles that minimize public inclusion on matters dealing with public goods. This requirement for public participation has been included in several other laws and is important for ensuring inclusion, transparency and accountability to the public on matters that affect people's daily lives, like NMT.

While enforcement of traffic laws is an important aspect of ensuring proper use of road facilities, including NMT and securing user safety, it should not precede engagement and

education. **If enforcement precedes awareness and engagement, it creates mistrust between the public and the authorities** and will often result in poor outcomes.

Enforcement can also be used as an opportunity to educate. For example, in the enforcement against encroachment of NMT facilities and drunk driving, NMS often resorts to collaborating with NTSA to revoke the driving licenses of such motorists and requires them to undertake refresher driving classes to understand and observe traffic regulations.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, this approach towards enforcement can prove to be more effective than fines. A traffic offender can easily pay for a fine, move on, and repeat the same offence. However, the inconvenience of having one's license revoked creates a deterrent with more magnitude.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an informed public will appreciate the benefits of NMT, which will, in turn, lead to a greater demand for proper infrastructure. This infrastructure will be used appropriately because of increased user education. Increased awareness will also ensure that the public is involved in the enforcement of traffic rules since they will be empowered on the rights to share the road and that of NMT users. Overall, this will result in a better and safer NMT-user experience.

In our next issue, we focus on building partnerships with the private sector and public transport actors; two groups that play a major role in the NMT experience.

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## ABOUT CDKN

CDKN works to enhance the quality of life for the poorest and most vulnerable to climate change. We support decision-makers in designing and delivering climate compatible development.

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