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Transport – South Africa

Liveable cities for all

Many urban dwellers in South Africa still live in suburbs and townships that are poorly connected to public transportation. Only in recent years has the expansion of public transport become an issue of greater importance. Safe cycling lanes and footpaths are still scarce. However, sustainable and inclusive mobility is a prerequisite for economic and social participation. Therefore, KfW supports selected South African municipalities in the process of expanding their infrastructure for non-motorised transport and thus also contributes to making cities more liveable for all segments of the population.

Context

In recent decades, South African transport policy - as in many other countries - almost exclusively prioritised the extension of its road network, which in turn promoted individual motorised transport also in cities. The expansion of public transport and infrastructure for non-motorised transport, such as by bicycle or on foot, has been neglected in cities. Only around 30 % of households in South Africa own a private vehicle. About 80 % of South Africans are dependent on public transportation, which usually exists but often only in the form of non-official minibuses. These are at times overcrowded and too expensive for many inhabitants of the townships and outskirts. Transport costs for residents of the poorly integrated townships can make up a high percentage (30 % or more) of their monthly expenses and are thus a major burden.

Walking or biking can in turn be dangerous due to the lack of infrastructure. In many districts, particularly in the townships, proper foot and cycle paths, traffic lights,

or street lights are often lacking. International statistics show that pedestrians are particularly at risk in South Africa as they account for 40 % of road traffic fatalities.

The South African government has become aware of the economic, environmental, and social consequences of this transport policy and has taken first steps to change this. More and more cities have begun to implement public transport, often in the form of bus rapid transit systems. The goal is to overcome the apartheid regime's urban planning legacy by integrating townships with central business districts through improved public transport.

Project name	Non-Motorised Transport Programme in South Africa
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	South Africa
Lead executing agency	Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA)





Developing infrastructure for non-motorized transport. Source: KfW photo archive, photographer: Claudia von Fersen.

Non-motorised transport (NMT) plays a vital role as it contributes to the solution of the so-called First- / Last-Mile problem by providing secure access to public transport through walking or cycling.

Project approach

On behalf of the German federal government, KfW Development Bank is financing the construction of infrastructure for non-motorised transport in the South African cities of Johannesburg (Soweto), Durban, and Polokwane. Thus, the project supports local municipalities in the implementation of a sustainable, inclusive, and safe transport policy. The promotion of non-motorised transport infrastructure allows citizens to reach public facilities in a safe and environmentally-friendly way, while also providing easier access to the public transport network.

The project entails the construction of sidewalks and bike paths. Special attention is paid to the further development and implementation of design standards and signage. Lessons learnt from the implementation of the project have been included in a best practice manual and have been shared at two national conferences on non-motorised transport, organised with the strong support of the project executing agency Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA).

In addition to financing infrastructure, the remaining project duration until the end of 2021 will be used to focus increasingly on awareness raising as well as on the availability of bicycles. In order to achieve this, the project will support existing civil society approaches and initiatives which aim to increase the awareness for and the use of non-motorised transport in South Africa.

Impact

The provision of infrastructure for NMT enables poorer parts of the population to access public facilities such as schools and hospitals in a safer and more cost-effective way. Workplaces that could previously only be reached under difficult and time-consuming conditions become more accessible through bike paths. In addition, NMT infrastructure helps to connect households to the public transportation network.

The existence of infrastructure for non-motorised transport is considered a basic prerequisite for encouraging more and more people in South Africa to use bicycles or walk. In this regard, the project can ultimately contribute to improving air quality and reducing emissions in South African cities.



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