



Liaison, Dialogue and Research

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Policy Dialogue Report

16 September 2021, Zoom Platform

SALO Public Multi-stakeholder Dialogue: Amplifying Marginalised Voices in Mozambique

PUBLIC MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE: AMPLIFYING MARGINALISED VOICES IN MOZAMBIQUE

THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 11:00 TO 13:00
(CAT)
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JOÃO FEIJÓ,
COORDINATOR OF
TECHNICAL
COUNCIL OMR



JULIA WACHAVE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF PROMURA



FATIMA MIMBIRE,
JOURNALIST AND
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDER



BISHOP RUBIN PHILLIP
SALO BOARD CHAIR AND
CO-CHAIR, KZN SOCIAL
COHESION AND MORAL
REGENERATION COUNCIL

Executive Summary

In partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, SALO hosted a public multi-stakeholder dialogue titled “*Amplifying Marginalised Voices in Mozambique*” on the 16th of September 2021. There were addresses from **João Feijó**, the coordinator of the technical council at the Rural Environment Observatory in Maputo; **Fatima Mimbire**, Journalist and Human Rights Defender; and **Julia Wachave**, the Director of the Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, Women and Girls Protection. SALO endeavours to build consensus and solidarity among stakeholders

in all its dialogues. This dialogue provided a localised picture of the conflict in northern Mozambique and amplified the voices of marginalised groups (e.g., IDPs, women, children, religious & ethnic minorities) in the presence of national, regional, and international civil society, diplomats, and other duty-bearers.

Summary of the Presentations

João Feijó, Rural Environment Observatory in Maputo

João Feijó opened the discussion by providing an update on Cabo Delgado's situation regarding the region and Rwanda's military presence. He noted that the area is more stable compared to April 2021 and explained that the official number of IDPs (800,000) is inflated due to many people being registered more than once by the government. He then highlighted three prevalent myths within government discourse concerning the 'enemy' behind the insurgency.

The enemy has no face

In his view, this is untrue as the insurgents come from the local communities. They are people raised in these areas, and according to Mr Feijó, many of the people he has spoken to are quite aware of who the main and intermediate leaders are.

"In fact, the names of the leaders were told to the government before the conflict started but the government didn't pay enough attention to it".

He went on to speak about the main leader, Bonomade Machude Omar, also known as Abu Sulayfa Muhammad or Ibn Omar, who was born in Palma and moved to Mocimboa da Praia at five years old after the death of his father. When his mother remarried, his stepfather converted him to Islam. He served as a navy soldier in the Mozambique defence force from 2003-2005 after finishing grade 10, then returned to finish his high schooling at an African Muslim boarding school.¹ Mr Feijó recounted how he met many people who went to school and played football with Bonomade. He was reportedly popular among his peers and was a good student. After school, he started working in an informal market for a Tanzanian merchant, where it is believed that he made radical contacts.

We don't know what they want

While it may be that the insurgents have not been clear about their demands, it is evident that they want an Islamist government under Sharia law. As such, they condemn democracy:

"Democracy is understood as a system responsible for social injustice, inequalities, and poverty. It is a system where the rich can become richer by exploiting the poor that become poorer. They use this myth of Chupa Sanguê that is widespread in all north of Mozambique. The Quran is the answer to social chaos".

¹ Mail & Guardian. 2022. *Bonomado Machude Omar, Mozambique's most wanted man*. 17 February. Available: <https://mg.co.za/africa/2022-02-17-bonomado-machude-omar-mozambiques-most-wanted-man/> [1 March 2022]

They also want jobs and for the local communities to benefit from the LNG projects.

There are no channels of communication

This myth refers to the fact the insurgents do not use formal channels of communication such as journalists or public pronouncements. However, Feijó pointed out that there are many informal channels through which they communicate.

“One is during the payment of redemptions with the involvement of police and intelligence when someone is kidnapped. There is this negotiation for paying to set them free. [Also], through family contacts, sending money to embezzle to people who are in Pemba or another place, giving information and news through telephone about the location of the army and other military issues moving from insurgent areas to government areas”.

He also highlighted that insurgents tend to dress in civilian clothes when going into government areas to not be noticed, which implies that they already have a social base of support within the population.

The departure of foreign troops

Regarding what will happen after the departure of foreign troops, Feijó stated that it would depend on whether reforms within the Mozambique army’s intelligence, internal affairs, and logistical support take place. He posited that success against the insurgency hinges on rebuilding trust between the army/government and the citizenry. Part of this rebuilding of trust comes from reforming public service and infrastructure development to meet the needs of the citizenry and create spaces for participation and access to justice. Economic support is also crucial for uplifting people whose means of production and income have been taken away by the conflict. In some cases, infrastructure needs a complete rebuild – many schools and hospitals have been destroyed in this conflict. Finally, reintegration is necessary for the people involved in the conflict, through amnesty, rehabilitation and economic activity. As Feijó put it:

“This is very important in order to give the local population the sense that violence is not the only possibility [for] participation, that there are channels where people can negotiate and pressure the government in order to get public policies that benefit local populations”.

In his conclusion, he explained that this conflict needs to be resolved through internal debate to envisage a new country. The development model needs to change *“from an extractive and capital-intensive model to a more inclusive and more labour-intensive model”*. By looking inward, with the goal of job creation and social inclusion, Feijó believes that Mozambique can create a new society that does not rely on violence to be heard. That can only be made possible by the political will of the government to consult with the people on the ground and to influence a new model of development.

Fatima Mimbire, Journalist and Human Rights Defender

Fatima Mimbire started her address by raising her concern about the aftermath of international support because, in her view, state security forces will not be prepared to control and maintain stability in the region. She worries that there is a lack of

government investment in collaboration with affected communities, social cohesion, and state institutions. The Rwandese deployment has highlighted these deficiencies, evidenced by the improvement in state communication since its commencement. Before the intervention, state repression of press freedoms was rampant, culminating in prosecutions and disappearances of media members and even ordinary citizens who publicly challenged the state. The Rwandese have been able to directly challenge the state on its methods of silencing opposers and prompt more open communication with the citizenry, which Mimbire sees as one good outcome of this military intervention.

“Now we see the government being not necessarily proactive but communicating more with the citizens because if they do not, the Rwandese will, and the reputation of the state will be harmed”.

Mimbire also spoke about internally displaced people (IDP) in the region and how 90% of them are not receiving assistance from the state. Part of this is due to the state's initial denial of the existence of IDPs which delayed the mobilisation of support for them. However, one major issue is that the state lacks the capacity to properly respond to the situation. The Mozambican Council of Ministers created the Integrated Northern Development Agency (ADIN) *“to promote multiform actions aimed at the socioeconomic development of the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula, in northern Mozambique”*.² However, ADIN has been unable to execute its mandate due to a lack of resources.

Deradicalisation was also brought up as one avenue for people to return to their lives after the end of the military intervention. This is important because there is no guarantee that the grievances related to poverty and socioeconomic exclusion will be addressed. The problems associated with the LNG projects that resulted in the relocation of many locals without benefitting from employment and economic opportunity as promised to them, have not been resolved. The benefits of these projects are reaped by elites in the cities of southern Mozambique and international investors. As such, the tensions between the state and the citizenry may remain even after the region is stabilised. As she pointed out, Cabo Delgado is one of the poorest provinces in the country, therefore *“how do you bring the idea that these impoverished people are part of a social and economic atmosphere which has [the] possibility to grow?”*

One crucial aspect of the grievances of the Mozambican people is their lack of involvement in government processes, including the development of the area. The government has acted unilaterally on behalf of the people while also excluding them and disrupting their ways of life through the LNG projects. According to Mimbire:

“What we saw during all these years since 2010 is the fact that the government is the one who negotiates everything on behalf of the people, given it is legitimated, but without [listening] to the people”.

² Club of Mozambique. 2021. *Mozambique: ADIN's strategic plan will be presented to Council of Ministers by mid-month*. 1 November. Available: <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-adins-strategic-plan-will-be-presented-to-council-of-ministers-by-mid-month-203858/> [2 March 2022]

Similarly, she noted that the National Development Plan is being reviewed because the last one was shaped without public involvement. She sees this as an opportunity for the government to consult the people and integrate the displaced people of Cabo Delgado into the socioeconomic discussion on development. Furthermore, the people should be able to see, through this document, how the government plans to use these instruments to address the grievances of the people.

Mimbire concluded by emphasising the importance of the state as an institution that needs to consider the needs of all its citizens and win back their trust and should not be affected by the predominance of the ruling party within the government.

Julia Wachave, Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, Women and Girls Protection

Julia Wachave began her address by highlighting the plight of the people living in the northern region of Mozambique (Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Niassa and Zambezia). She noted that IDPs in the region are living with food insecurity in dire conditions. In some instances, 15-30 people are living in one household, making them extremely vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, these conditions make violence a constant threat. This is compounded by the lack of protection services in the region, which makes it difficult for NGOs to reach affected areas. Many IDPs are dealing with psychological trauma related to the violence, and some of the victims are even suicidal as they are not getting the support they need. Many victims are not even aware of the existence of public services, and they have no avenues to make their needs known.

The biggest group of marginalised people in the region are women and children. They do not have access to public services and the traditional way of living means that their voices are suppressed. They are often victims of gender-based violence which results in many women and girls falling pregnant.

“...more than 1000 women are pregnant [and] they are coming from the bush; they are coming from areas where there has been conflict. So, we don't know if those pregnancies are from the insurgents [or] from the husband, but we know that they have been raped, and they are coming to the cities pregnant.”

Aside from that, women also do not have any economic mobility and are thus resigned to their situations. Without any economic empowerment or access to any services, many cannot escape violence or find refuge elsewhere.

There is no clear national plan to respond to IDPs nor are there mechanisms for dialogue where they can express their needs or give accounts of what goes on in IDP camps. Wachave spoke of what her organisation, PROMURA, does to help vulnerable people in the region – particularly women and girls. PROMURA works in capacity building and has programmes that aim to help women amplify their voices. She explained how they met with the former director of UN Women and tried to put IDPs in direct contact with the UN organisation to express their needs. They tried the same with the African Union. PROMURA also has a programme sponsored by OSISA that aims to train women that lead within resettlement centres and connect them to the requisite bodies.

Contributions and Questions from the Floor

Leila Constantino from Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP) spoke as a respondent to the addresses given by the panellists. CIP conducted a work-study on government spending on the conflict in Cabo Delgado from 2017-2020, which is estimated at USD 1.1 billion or 64 billion Mozambican meticaïs. The concern here, however, is that although some parts of the defence budget are typically not published due to issues of state security, there is no mention whatsoever of the conflict in Cabo Delgado in the budget execution reports from the government. This is peculiar considering that the defence and public security sectors are also social sectors and therefore are obligated to be transparent about budget occurrences. Otherwise, the lack of transparency and accountability opens the door for the misuse of state funds. The CIP published these findings to advocate for government transparency in its management of funds related to the conflict.

Piers Pigou from the International Crisis Group (ICG) asked the panel what the primary levers and potential access points are to influence the state on security and humanitarian concerns towards a more enlightened approach to addressing the issues at hand, or towards having more evidence-based conversations. He also asked about the role that the international community can play in supporting initiatives related to security sector reform and donor engagement.

Adriana Nhancale from Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento (CDD) contextualised the conflict as being the result of the exclusion and exploitation of the Northern part of Mozambique. The CDD conducts a lot of research through its youth hubs in all the provinces and Nhancale believes that the most important perspectives are from those most affected – IDPs and other victims of the violent extremism in the region.

Ambassador Welile Nhlapo sought clarity on the mandate of the military intervention and the markers that would indicate its success. He made the point that there is little knowledge of the agreement behind the military intervention and history dictates that it is not easy getting foreign troops out of an area of conflict.

Ineke Stemmet from SALO asked a question about the role of women and women's organisations in the disarmament, deradicalisation, and reintegration process. She asked if there is any kind of capacity for that, and if not, what support could be given in that regard.

Responses from the Panellists

João Feijó

- The government needs to first understand the causes of the conflict to address it. The causes are rooted in these axes of contradiction: ethnicity, class, poverty, regional inequality, and north and south politics. President Nyusi still thinks this conflict only has a military solution.
- Foreign troops will not leave soon, especially when the LNG projects resume. They are presumably paid by Total Energies and thus will remain in the country for as long as President Nyusi is in power. As such, the next round of elections is crucial.

- The solution needs to come internally through structures like ADIN and FRELIMO needs to reimagine its model of development. Foreign dependence without internal restructuring will result in further misuse of aid by the government and its affiliates. Furthermore, negotiations need to take place between FRELIMO and the insurgent group, Ansar al-Sunna, which will be difficult.
- The international community can support capacity building and institutional reforms on education, health, and rural extension. Foreign aid should support economic activity in agriculture, the informal economy, and small businesses. It should be used to train local entrepreneurs and provide them with credit.

Fatima Mimbire

- The state has responsibilities to the people. Institutions geared to responding to calamities do exist, so it is unclear why there is no definitive state response in Cabo Delgado. There is international support, but the challenge lies in interacting with the government, possibly because the government does not want the international community to know the extent of the human rights violations occurring in the region.
- One other reason for the lack of response could be that the state lacks resources. Also, resource mobilisation is slowed due to the lack of trust in the government institutions to properly manage those resources.
- According to what we know, the Rwandan and SADC military intervention has a three-month mandate that can be extended depending on the situation on the ground. The question of when the region is considered stable is important because operation results indicate that the soldiers are reclaiming territories, but not capturing insurgents in hiding. Thus, there is nothing to suggest that once foreign troops leave the area, the insurgents will not resurface and reclaim territories.
- Lastly, the EU will be sending troops, but not to Cabo Delgado. They will be stationed in Manica, central Mozambique, and Maputo. It is important to know why this is the case for the sake of accountability and transparency. There are cooperation agreements on military training with the US, China, Russia, and other countries; yet the state cannot respond to the conflict in Cabo Delgado. We do not know the contents of the agreements with these states and international bodies, including Rwanda and SADC. This could be resolved by presenting this information in parliament.

Conclusion

This dialogue put a spotlight on the current blockages to addressing the conflict in Cabo Delgado as it relates to the state. The common theme amongst all the speakers was the need for transparency and accountability from the government regarding the gravity of the situation, the spending on the conflict, and a process inclusive of citizens and marginalised groups through which to develop a strategy to bring the conflict to an end, as well as advance development in the region and country that benefits all who live in it. The amplification of marginalised voices in the presence of national, regional, and international civil society and other duty-bearers is the first of many important steps that are necessary to build consensus and solidarity among stakeholders, and ultimately bring forth a resolution to the conflict in Cabo Delgado.

The analysis and recommendations included in this report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:

S A L O 

International liaison, dialogue and research

The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy, especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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