



Liaison, Dialogue and Research

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The Southern African Liaison Office (NPC)

Liesbeek House, River Park,
Gloucester Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700

Tel: +27 (021) 680 5306

Email: info@salo.org.za

www.salo.org.za

[@salo_info](https://twitter.com/salo_info)

Policy Brief

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Public Dialogue on Mozambique

By Ineke Stemmet, SALO

SALO PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON MOZAMBIQUE

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MUNJODZI
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PROF ADRIANO NUVUNGA
DIRECTOR, CDD



AMB KINGSLEY MAMABOLO



MILISA MBETE
SALO



Executive summary

On the 13th of January 2022, SALO in partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, hosted a public multi-stakeholder dialogue on the conflict in Northern Mozambique. Speakers included Eгна Sidumo (Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Joaquim Chissano University), Prof. Adriano Nuvunga (Center for Democracy and Development), Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, and Claudio Feo (Norwegian People's Aid).

This dialogue brought together national, regional, and international civil society as well as other relevant stakeholders to build consensus and solidarity with the people of Mozambique.

Context/Importance of the Problem

The conflict in northern Mozambique has been on the regional bloc's agenda for the past few years and is certain to be a key issue for the region in 2022. The ongoing violence prompted military interventions and external commitments to fight the ongoing insurgency. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed troops to the area in an attempt to quell the insurgency from further escalation and spillover in a mission dubbed SAMIM (SADC Mission in Mozambique).¹ Independently from the SADC deployment, the Rwandan government sent troops to Mozambique in July 2021.²

Since the deployments swift military progress has been made, including the re-capturing of several towns such as Mocimboa da Praia, which had been under the control of the insurgents for over a year. Many insurgent groups have been forced to disperse and their stronghold in the region is weakening.³ Despite this, the threat posed by the conflict for regional peace and stability is still concerning and requires an integrated, multidimensional, and coordinated effort on the part of the main actors in the region.

This dialogue took place against the backdrop of the first 2022 SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on 7 January that had Mozambique as the sole item on the agenda.⁴

¹ Defence Web. 2021. SAMIM marks milestones in counter-insurgency fight. 10 November. Available: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/samim-marks-milestones-in-counter-insurgency-fight/> [12 November, 2021].

² IOL. 2021. SADC extends troop deployment in Mozambique to fight insurgency. 5 October. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/world/sadc-extends-troop-deployment-in-mozambique-to-fight-insurgency-16af5c80-8ac7-5295-9b2f-208e8e9bd6b9> [8 March 2022]

³ Smith, J. 2022. Africa: Rwanda - a Force for Good in Mozambique's "War On Terror"? 9 February. Available: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202202100025.html> [8 March 2022]

⁴ SADC. 2022. SADC to hold an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government to review progress of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). 4 January. Available: <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-hold-extraordinary-summit-heads-state-and-government-review-progress-sadc-mission-mozambique-samim/> [8 March 2022]

The SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government

The communiqué stemming from the SADC Summit revealed several things. It approved the Framework for Support to the Republic of Mozambique, which outlines actions for consolidating peace, security and the socio-economic recovery of Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province. It also commended the “successful operations and ... achievements recorded since the deployment of the Mission in July 2021”.⁵ This type of cooperation between SADC member states is commendable but is long overdue, according to Dr Clever Chikwanda. The SADC Heads of States also noted and applauded Mozambique for the reconstruction and development plan that is intended to provide social services to Mozambicans.

The military victories are not, however, an indication of a long-term solution or a situation of durable peace. Furthermore, the coordination between the Rwanda Defence Force and SAMIM was not mentioned as a point of discussion in the communiqué from the Summit. This is a problem for the issue of transparency and accountability. Clarity over the coordination mechanisms and terms of engagement is important to successfully monitor the intervention and its outcomes. This is further important for operational concerns. Mozambique has made it clear that it wishes to take the lead in the deployment of troops. According to Piers Pigou,

“If it is not going to play that coordination role in an effective, efficient way [it] is going to compromise the competencies and capacities of armed force action. There is a real danger [that] we are going to see the security forces being dragged into a long-term insurgency, a long term situation of insecurity and instability, which will, in turn, temper the ability of IDPs to return to their communities and to be safe within those communities [and] to rebuild community-centric intelligence and policing operations.”

Multi-dimensional Conflict/Narratives Surrounding the Conflict

The dialogue highlighted the differing narratives surrounding the conflict. One of these is the perspective of violent extremism. Several organisations have labelled the conflict as ‘international terrorism’, and to a degree the capacity shown by the insurgents in their recruiting methods and ability to destroy infrastructure, coupled with their use of language and insignia synonymous with international terrorist organisations demonstrates some outside influence.

⁵ Southern African Development Community. 2022. COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC). 22 January. Available: <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/communique-extraordinary-summit-heads-state-and-government-southern-african-development-community-sadc/> [10 March 2022]

However, according to the speakers, even though the conflict in Mozambique has elements of violent extremism, it is not the only cause. There are various other economic, social, and political reasons why many young people in the area are considering the use of violence as a means of political communication.

The question of whether to refer to the perpetrators of violence as terrorists or extremists/insurgents is very important. The type of language used to discuss the conflict will affect the type of intervention that is employed to address the conflict.

Dr Clever Chikwanda expanded on this point:

“Even on the African continent, there's the narrative that we don't speak to terrorists. When we label them terrorists, it then informs whether or not we can talk to them. I think that this narrative has to change. It will lead to top-down development [which is not] people-centred.”

He believes that the insurgents should be part of a dialogue process and should include those with business interests in Mozambique, women and children and all other relevant stakeholders.

Cabo Delgado is underpinned by networks of organised crime and has a large illicit economy. This has been present for decades and has contributed to magnifying the capacity of insurgent groups and catalysing the radicalisation of potential members. The heavy-handed military response and the involvement of private military groups in the conflict have contributed to a myriad of human rights violations and further radicalisation of local young people.

The people of Cabo Delgado do not benefit from the extractives industry in the area. This marginalisation has long been considered one of the most salient root causes of the conflict. This issue has not yet been addressed. Professor Adriano Nuvunga believes that *“what is [at] the core [of the conflict] is the ‘extractivism’ and how that is driving and stewing radicalisation and is continuing to fuel spots of radicalisation and recruitment.”*

The Mozambican People

Egna Sidumo articulated that while most analyses about the conflict are focused on violent extremism, few are giving special attention to women and children:

“For example, we had situations where we found thousands of children radicalised and no one [knows] how the government or civil society organisations can intervene to work on the de-radicalisation of [children] to prevent violent extremism.”

The IDP camps in Mozambique and the dynamics in these camps are not well known. Most people living in these camps are women and children. A fruitful peacebuilding and reconstruction strategy would include working with women to find a way of addressing the root causes of the conflict. A good starting point could be for regional organisations to engage women in IDP camps.

Egna further identified a gap in the response to the conflict. Many of the people who are affected the most by the conflict do not necessarily know what violent extremism and radicalisation mean. They are not aware of how they can engage civil society organisations or the government to communicate their needs and perspectives.

“We cannot talk about these people if [we] are not communicating with the people who are suffering [as a result of] violent extremism. We cannot think on strategic options, military or non-military, without informing people about what is going on and how they can be [helpful] for the prevention [of] violent extremists.”

Military Intervention

Initially, the military intervention resulted in a disadvantage for the insurgents. However, four months later there have been reports of insurgents regrouping, reorganising, and launching frequent attacks against local populations and women, recruiting young people and expanding to other parts of the country. This led to a new insurgent front being established in Nyasa. Insurgents have been benefitting from cross border activity and cooperation, especially with neighbouring Tanzania. This is an issue that needs urgent attention from SADC.

At the intelligence level, little is known about the group’s streams of financial income, recruitment lines, and how they continue to recruit young people from local communities relatively easily. More research is necessary to gauge these important aspects as well as to fully understand the root causes of the conflict.

The role of the military in opening up humanitarian corridors is an aspect of the intervention that has not been properly considered. The independent monitoring of the military is also an issue. There have been several reports of human rights violations. However, this remains unverified. Most of the stories coming from the ground about the number of casualties are anecdotal reports, including the alleged use of civilians as human shields by the military.

There also remains a question mark over the extension of the operation in Mozambique and how long this will be implemented. The general understanding is that there will be a three-month timeframe initially, then another three months, but all of this is very contingent on the amount of money that will be made available. \$29.5 million has been allocated at this stage, which is a relatively a small amount and it is not expected that the SAMIM force will be significantly reinforced which could raise some issues.

Non-military intervention

The Mozambican government recently announced a program for reconstruction and development, the *Resilience and Development Strategy for the North*, which has been framed as an attempt to resolve the socio-economic problems. This is an

acknowledgement that the problem is not solely military, but multi-dimensional. According to the Institute for Security Studies:

*“The strategy is the first official document to recognise the role of internal factors in creating the conflict. It cites socio-economic inequalities, frustration related to the exploitation of natural resources, especially among youth in the north, political and economic exclusion, and perceived marginalisation by the local population.”*⁶

The current socio-economic situation requires interventions at different levels. John Paul Lederach’s levels of action triangle refer to interventions at grassroots, middle and policymaking levels nationally.⁷ The government of Mozambique, other stakeholders, and international donors must find a working formula to implement this. Previously, there have been suspicions between SADC and international donors, especially when it comes to elections.

Civil society organisations have the responsibility to work on a non-military strategy and prevent extremism by understanding radicalisation and sharing this information with the community. The process of de-radicalisation of young people, women, and even children is a very important element in a no-military strategy. Claudio Feo added to this view by stating that one of the issues their organisation has been witnessing on the ground is a loss of institutional trust in communities:

“I think that there is an issue of governance or local level we have to look at and we have an opportunity to gear our intervention on the ground in Mozambique, looking at rebuilding a social fabric, which has now completely unglued as people have physically moved and [are] being physically displaced.”

Local governance and institutions should be prioritised in a rebuilding strategy and in terms of reconstruction, local economies should gain support to move away from the reliance on the extractives industry.

Critique of policy options

- The local communities in Cabo Delgado have not successfully been engaged as an important actor in finding a solution to the conflict. Communities and IDPs are often viewed as suspicious or as mere victims without any agency. They have to be actors in a peacebuilding process because they understand the local context on the ground better than anyone else.

⁶ Nhamirre, B. 2022. But can FRELIMO’s elites accept responsibility for youth frustrations and agree to share the country’s riches? Institute for Security Studies. 8 February. Available: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/mozambique-shifts-gear-with-its-new-strategy-for-the-north> [10 March 2022]

⁷ Maiese, M. 2003. Levels of Action (Lederach’s Pyramid). July. Available: https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/hierarchical_intervention_levels [10 March 2022]

- SADC's stance toward the conflict has improved. Previously, SADC was relatively closed off to engaging on the conflict but has started to do so with civil society in Maputo and Cabo Delgado and several key ambassadors from the region.
- Many of the policy options and interventions have been top-down and not bottom-up. This is an internal problem in Mozambique.

Policy Recommendations

- There is an urgent need in Cabo Delgado to improve the governance infrastructure of extractive industries.
- Small mineral projects that benefit local populations including women should be supported. These populations must be part of a constructive and developmental and people-centred extractive industry.
- The development framework needs to be localised.
- SADC should use its platforms of cooperation to restrict cross border movement of insurgents, especially between Tanzania and Mozambique.
- The prevention of radicalisation as well as de-radicalisation is important and should be addressed by regional and continental organisations, learning from the experiences of similar situations elsewhere in the region and continent.
- Women in IDP camps should be engaged as a means of finding solutions to the root causes of the conflict.
- Community-centred strategies are needed.
- Those who benefit from the extractives industry should be identified and engaged in dialogue to explore a solution to the issue of marginalisation at a policy level.
- Mozambican civil society should start demanding independent monitoring of the military.
- The intervention should be at grassroots, middle, and policymaking levels nationally.
- There needs to be an enabling environment for research in Mozambique. So far there has not been an adequate push from the research community on this. Political support is necessary to be able to go to Mozambique for research purposes.
- Actors in the space should be wary of glorifying military intervention. The nature of the conflict in Mozambique is that of asymmetrical warfare which is often not effectively stifled through a traditional military offensive.
- SADC should listen to differing perspectives and narratives surrounding the conflict. The narrative of "terrorism" is limiting in that it does not allow for nuanced solutions and dialogue.

Questions and Comments From the Participants

- **Dr Clever Chikwanda:** *“How inclusive has the Mozambican development framework been? If it doesn't address the root cause of conflict, in its inclusivity, then that's where the problem is. There won't be trust from the people who are supposed to own it, or the people [who were] affected. There won't be ownership by women and children, and of course, the grassroots. What are women supposed to be doing, what are children supposed to be doing? What is the mediation reference group from the SADC Secretariat doing?”*
- **Ambassador Welile Nhlapo** made the following comment: *“We're asking the question, why is it easy to recruit them (young people)? It is easy precisely because of their conditions. I mean, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to get into that understanding that deprivation and marginalisation – as long as that continues [Mozambique is] going to continue to have problems.”*
- **Anthoni van Nieuwkerk:** *“I think as a research community in the region, we need to pull our forces together and say to SADC, we demand that you open a channel of communication with us. Even stronger, we demand that you create a liaison structure that will allow us as researchers on the ground, from the region working cross border to inform SADC and assist it with its decision making, in an effort to break that mould that sovereignty and state-oriented decision making has [been] imposed on us as a region.”*
- **Jasmine Opperman:** *“Sovereignty is exactly the reason why we are sitting with a forgotten Cabo Delgado. So, how are we going to build that bridge in terms of social cohesion? How are we going to build the bridge in terms of winning the trust of communities scattered all over Mozambique? That remains now a problematic factor we need to acknowledge.”*

And

- *“A simple question, for instance, and I know it is a sensitive issue, is [the] relationship between Rwanda, France and Total and the LNG sector and how that influences the Rwandan deployment and other private military corporations and the search for synergy so desperately needed amongst the forces currently being deployed. I agree wholeheartedly, [the] military can never provide a solution, but we need to find stability before we even can start considering [other interventions].”*

And

- *“Can we still talk about communities in Cabo Delgado? How many villages have been destroyed? How many children are not even attending schools? How many children are scattered? And this is our core reality.”*

Conclusion

This dialogue brought forward many key issues and talking points for further discussion. The speakers and participants made it clear that this is not the end of the insurgency, the momentum still rests with the insurgents and they have splintered up into cells.

A central takeaway from this dialogue is that there are a lot of unknowns in terms of the understanding of many of the contributing factors that are at play. As such, more research is required. De-radicalisation and de-escalation of the conflict are important factors, but the marginalisation and socio-economic situation people face should be kept in mind as the root causes of the conflict that need urgent addressing. A successful intervention would need to take place on all levels – grassroots, national and regional. Communities need to be supported to take ownership over the reconstruction and development; and women and children need to be engaged to prevent radicalisation and find well-informed solutions to the problems on the ground. Furthermore, a larger focus should be placed on intelligence gathering to gain a deeper understanding of the group’s financing and recruitment practices.

The analysis and recommendations included in this brief 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 brief 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:



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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