

## SALO Public Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Mozambique



### Executive Summary

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO), in partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, hosted a dialogue titled: “Public Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Mozambique”. The conversation took place after the first 2022 SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government which began on 7 January and had Mozambique as the sole item on the agenda. The dialogue was chaired by SALO members, **Munjodzi Mutandiri** and **Milisuthando Mbete**, and opened by **Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo**.

The speakers were **Professor Adriano Nuvunga**, Center for Democracy and Development, **Egna Sidumo**, Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Joaquim Chissano University, and **Claudio Feo**, Norwegian People's Aid. Members of the national, regional, and international civil society and other relevant stakeholders were present.

## Summary of the Presentations

### **Professor Adriano Nuvunga**, Center for Democracy and Development

Professor Nuvunga explained the importance of understanding the different and competing narratives around what is taking place in Cabo Delgado - namely, the narrative of international terrorism, versus the narrative of local grievances.

From the perspective of Professor Nuvunga, it is vital to read the situation as largely an issue of local grievances - a situation of poverty, inequality, and disenfranchisement. While religious fundamentalism is present, he explains,

*“what has taken young people to start this level of violence speaks to [the] marginalisation of their people in the overall context of an elite-centric extractivism that it is not generating development.”*

There is a myriad of factors at play in Cabo Delgado, creating an environment where young people may become ‘radicalised’ or violent. The state’s relationship with the citizens, particularly the youth, has deteriorated. It uses armed forces and contracts private military groups to “*keep the citizens at bay*,” while they watch the elite take ownership of resources that could have generated them a livelihood. Instead of the state providing development and support to the local population, state resources are seen to be concentrated on providing armed protection of elite-owned extractives. This leads to further social dis-cohesion.

Professor Nuvunga stressed the urgent need for a change in how extractive industries are managed - it is vital that local populations are included. He called for a shift towards a type of governance of extractive industries that is “*constructive, developmental, and people-centred*”. Until this happens, the extreme disenfranchisement, social dis-cohesion, and heavy-handed military suppression of the local population will see the youth continuing to become radicalised.

Reading the situation through a narrative of international terrorism runs the risk of believing the solution to the conflict is purely military. While the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and the Rwandan deployment, which was deployed in July 2021 to Cabo Delgado, has been relatively successful,

*“...four months later, we began to see violent extremists regrouping, reorganising, and launching frequent attacks, targeting local populations, targeting women, recruiting young people, and also expanding to other parts of the country. Now they have opened a new front in Nyasa”.*

He, therefore, stressed the importance of military cooperation with neighbouring countries, particularly with Tanzania, and the importance of the role of regional bodies such as SADC in providing leadership with regards to military tactics, and military intelligence. While the military forces have had some success, military intelligence is lacking - there is still very little information regarding how the groups are able to finance themselves, or how they can recruit so successfully.

But even more importantly, Professor Nuvunga argued that SADC has not given priority to building dialogue. The narrative of international terrorism plays a role in hindering dialogue, as it closes down opportunities for communication. For instance, since the violent extremists are also members of ordinary communities, being able to engage in dialogue with those communities at large would be very beneficial. In such instances, Nuvunga argues, international organisations like the International Committee of the Red Cross and faith-based organisations should be brought in to strengthen communication.

In making dialogue a priority, communities need to be actively involved in the process to the extent that any security strategy should be community-centred:

*“Communities should not be looked at as IDPs [internally displaced persons]...as victims, or be looked as suspicious. They have to be the actors of that process...They know the context”.*

**Egna Sidumo**, Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Joaquim Chissano University

Sidumo stressed the importance of understanding the socio-political context of Mozambique before engaging in strategies to contain the violence facing the region. She traced the causes of the conflict in Cabo Delgado to a combination of religious influence, extreme poverty and the development issues linked to global interest in the extractives industry. She highlighted that it is mostly young people that are involved in this conflict, for varying reasons of an economic, social and political nature. Sidumo acknowledged that military interventions are important as they have proven to be useful for conflict resolution within the continent, however, in the case of Mozambique, this military intervention has not been complemented by a more comprehensive and global vision of the interconnected issues. She advised that there needs to be a commitment to working towards addressing the root causes. As a practical solution,

researchers should start studying the poverty and development issues to fully understand the factors inflaming the violent extremist groups.

Women and children are bearing the brunt of this conflict. Currently, more than a thousand children have been radicalised and recruited by warlords. Unfortunately, there is largely silence on this matter from the government and civil society organisations. Even though there is a large number of women in Internally Displaced People (IDP) centres, they remain absent from dialogue. As a result, they are not informed on events and often do not know what is happening in the conflict. Women should be receiving communication from relevant parties and should be centred in any potential dialogues around conflict de-escalation in Mozambique.

Sidumo advises that the process of radicalisation must be contained. Fundamentally, this means that one must be vigilant enough to observe (1) the organisation of new attacks, and (2) the spread of violent extremism to other areas. It has become evident how quickly violence spreads, as can be seen with the violence in Nyasa spreading to Nampula, and even to the Zambezi. Sidumo also states that shared experiences from other countries like Rwanda, Kenya and other countries that have experienced similar conflict could become useful in strategising solutions.

Civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and regional actors all have a part to play in peacekeeping, Sidumo explains, urging them to do more regarding the issues currently experienced by the people in Cabo Delgado, including to complement the efforts already made by the state. She further argues that they have a responsibility to communicate with the community with regards to what is going on in the field, and about how people can be engaged to work on stability.

Finally, she expressed that she is currently concerned about the lack of de-radicalisation programs in Mozambique and the absence of efforts to address radicalisation in the community. Working with the people of Cabo Delgado on the ground, she realised that although people are suffering at the hands of the insurgents, they do not know what violent extremism means or what radicalisation is. It is with this that she calls on stakeholders to engage directly with the most affected people:

*“We cannot talk about these people if [we] are not communicating with the people who are suffering [from the] violent extremism.”*

**Claudio Feo**, Norwegian People’s Aid

Claudio Feo mentions that the Norwegian People’s Aid has been working in Cabo Delgado with local organisations since 2010. He notes that one of the causes of the conflict is decreasing institutional trust, where communities have detached from the local institutions and distrust the law:

*“I think that there is an issue of governance [on a] local level [that] 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”.*

He agrees that the idea of a military intervention is widely accepted and is a necessary evil, but that the role of militaries must include opening humanitarian corridors. Thus far, they have only been considered to open commercial areas.

On the issue of reconstruction, he asks what kind of reconstruction, and which economies we are going to prioritise. Feo stresses a need to look at communities as actors, and not just as eventual beneficiaries of aid. He urges for the removal of extremists and a new start where local economies are prioritised. He cites sustenance agriculture as a way to get started.

## **Selected Contributions and Questions from the Floor**

- **Piers Pigou** notes that there are a lot of unknowns and a limited understanding of the situation in Cabo Delgado. He probes for an environment that would enable thorough research to take place. The state generally does not allow opposing views and thus analysts and commentators are finding themselves being ignored or side-lined. For him, this issue needs to be addressed seriously and urgently.
- **Jasmine Opperman** contributed to the issue of human security. She notes that development is not only an economic concept and that the people of Cabo Delgado need their human dignity back. *“You can build roads, you can provide electricity, you can build as much confidence initially, but at the end of the day, their needs and what they want cannot be ignored in terms of their way of life stolen by so many actors.”*
- **Ambassador Welile Nhlapho** warns of glorifying military intervention. *“We seem to forget that we [are] talking about young Mozambicans here and it [is] young Mozambicans who have been marginalised or have been removed from their source of livelihood.”*

## **Responses from panelists.**

**Professor Adriano Nuvunga** concluded by commending the fact that there have been some improvements regarding how SADC is handling the situation. SADC is beginning to engage more with regional players and local civil society and is slowly shifting its focus away from the capital city towards including the perspectives of those in Cabo Delgado. However, he emphasised, SADC needs to understand the

importance of how the situation is framed and what narratives are used around Cabo Delgado. He suggests that we move away from the narrative of ‘*international terrorism*,’ as it limits possibilities for nuanced analysis and engaging stakeholders. He also emphasised the importance of supporting the development of Cabo Delgado, yet not allowing development initiatives to be “*captured by Maputo centric elites*.” As such, development should not be done in a ‘top-down’ approach and should move beyond a focus on extractive industries.

**Egna Sidumo**, concurring with comments made by Professor Nuvunga, emphasised that, while SADC should play a key role, there is also a need to think about the role that national actors and local communities can play. She also stressed the importance of solving Mozambique's “*problems of development, political problems, or even economic problems*”, as the situation in Cabo Delgado is embedded within the broader political economy of Mozambique.

## Conclusion

This dialogue brought together national, regional and international civil society and other relevant stakeholders in order to build consensus and solidarity with the people of Mozambique. It allowed participants to begin to build towards a shared understanding of how the conflict should or should not be framed, understood, and approached. Taking place against the backdrop of the first 2022 SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, the dialogue provided an opportunity for the role of SADC to be critically examined. Regional actors such as SADC were extensively discussed, particularly the ways in which SADC could improve how it understands, engages with, and structures interventions in Cabo Delgado.

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***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.***

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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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