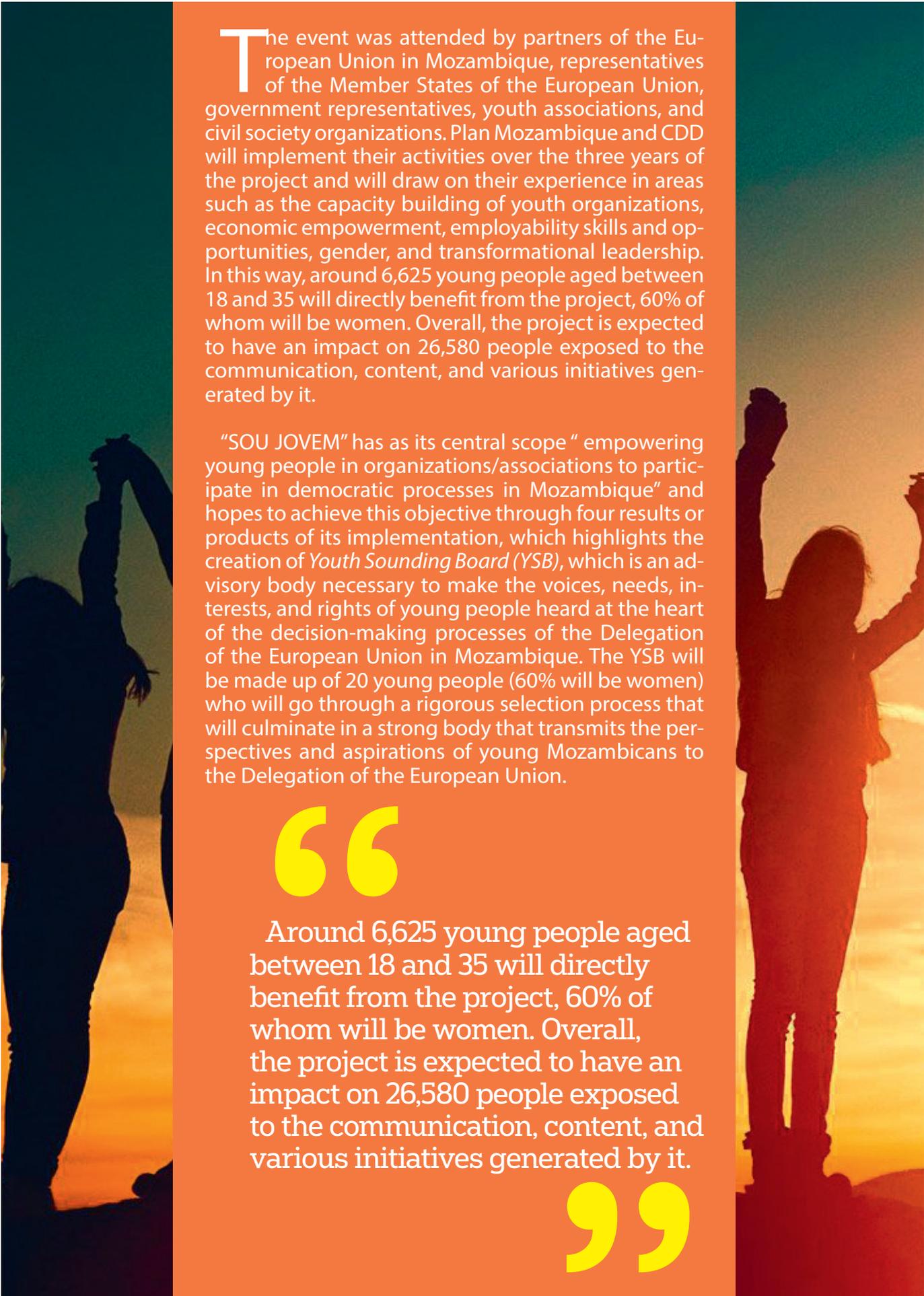


WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Plan International and CDD launch project “SOU JOVEM - Youth leading the Change!”

- Conceived to empower youth organizations for greater participation in the civic and democratic space in Mozambique, Plan International Mozambique and the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) launched on March 17, in Maputo, “SOU JOVEM”, a nationwide project co-financed by the European Union (EU) and Plan International.





The event was attended by partners of the European Union in Mozambique, representatives of the Member States of the European Union, government representatives, youth associations, and civil society organizations. Plan Mozambique and CDD will implement their activities over the three years of the project and will draw on their experience in areas such as the capacity building of youth organizations, economic empowerment, employability skills and opportunities, gender, and transformational leadership. In this way, around 6,625 young people aged between 18 and 35 will directly benefit from the project, 60% of whom will be women. Overall, the project is expected to have an impact on 26,580 people exposed to the communication, content, and various initiatives generated by it.

“SOU JOVEM” has as its central scope “empowering young people in organizations/associations to participate in democratic processes in Mozambique” and hopes to achieve this objective through four results or products of its implementation, which highlights the creation of *Youth Sounding Board (YSB)*, which is an advisory body necessary to make the voices, needs, interests, and rights of young people heard at the heart of the decision-making processes of the Delegation of the European Union in Mozambique. The YSB will be made up of 20 young people (60% will be women) who will go through a rigorous selection process that will culminate in a strong body that transmits the perspectives and aspirations of young Mozambicans to the Delegation of the European Union.

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Dr. Gerald Magashi, National Director of Plan Moçambique

In his speech, Gerald Magashi, National Director of Plan Moçambique, highlighted the aspects that connect the organization to the objective of the “SOU JOVEM” project and how this, in turn, responds to the scenario of youth crisis that Mozambique is experiencing. The Plan International has been operating in Mozambique since 2006, being one of the leading organizations in promoting the rights of children, adolescents, and young people, as well as promoting equality for girls and young women. This is how it responds to the needs of young people in Mozambique, which is among the 20 countries with the fastest growing populations in the world, with an average age of 17.6 years, being one of the youngest in the world. This trend has created significant pressure on social infrastructure and on the employment sector, with negative effects on poverty in the form of unemployment, premature marriages and illiteracy.

In his view, despite collective efforts in investing in human capital and promoting youth participation in spaces for dialogue and decision-making with a view to economic growth and sustainable development, youth participation in these spaces is still low, especially among women, young people, and young people with disabilities. Gerald Magashi stressed that for this initiative to be successful, coordination with civil society, Government stakeholders, the Secretary of State for Youth and Employment in particular, the Delegation of the European Union, and the representations of the Member States in Mozambique, as well as commitment and appropriation by the youth themselves.



Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the CDD

In turn, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the CDD, stated that the implementation of the “SOU JOVEM” project responds to its strategic focus aimed at catalyzing democratic development, human rights and inclusive governance based on youth agency.

As he mentioned, although Mozambique has experienced strong economic growth in the last two decades, the growth pattern has not been inclusive, leaving many Mozambicans behind, especially the youth layer. These problems and challenges demand the existence of solid initiatives and policies that allow young people to lead for a change. CDD’s intervention will contribute to the empowerment of young people through initiatives that are already underway, within the scope of its transformational approach: Transformational Leadership Academy, Youth Hubs and Policy Dialogues. These are initiatives that ultimately aim to catalyze a successful young agency in driving lasting changes that contribute to social cohesion.

Furthermore, he reiterated that “beautiful and well-designed programs, if not adapted and implemented inclusively with young people at the center of decision-making processes, will not achieve the proposed results”. Therefore, youth should not be included, but they should lead the change process.



Itelevina Matusse, leader of the Mozambican Activist Movement

Intervening on the occasion, Itelevina Matusse, a young leader of the Mozambican Activist Movement, said that this is a window of opportunity being given to young people. Young people will be able to openly debate issues that go against their daily concerns as part of society, as well as seek better solutions, mainly in aspects related to young women, the promotion of gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

Itelevina Matusse hopes that this initiative will benefit young people in the medium and long term and that the way will be opened so that other generations can have a model of how to live in society and face the challenges that lie ahead. “We would like this youth project to be a model for Mozambican youth, both urban and rural youth. We believe that we should all have the same opportunities to be able to fight together and on an equal footing for our interests”, she said in her speech.

action plan to support the empowerment of young people, providing the necessary tools and skills to create solutions that face global challenges.



Antonino Maggiore, Ambassador of the European Union in Mozambique

“We need empowered young people, involved and committed to creating solutions for very important issues that affect their future, such as access to education, employment and health, armed conflicts, climate change, and the digital and technological world”, said the Ambassador. It is in this context that the “SOU JOVEM” project responds very well to the European Union’s Action Plan. Through this, the European Union intends to build a relationship focused on its involvement, empowerment and capacity building.

“Young people must be agents of change and not just agents with the power to change things”, stressed Antonino Maggiore, encouraging interest on the part of young people in this initiative. Finally, the Ambassador reaffirmed the European Union’s commitment to young Mozambicans, as well as its support in crucial areas for the development of children and young people, namely nutrition, education, professional training, employment, ecological transition, and the digital agenda. “Let us not end with words, but with concrete actions”, he reinforced.



Nina Yengo, gender expert at Plan International Mozambique

Nina Yengo, a gender expert at Plan International Mozambique, and Américo Maluana, CDD Program Coordinator, conducted the project presentation session for a better understanding by those present, underlining the intervention logic that will be carried out to reach the final objective. Nina Yengo specifically addressed the establishment of the Youth sounding Board, the platform connecting young people and the European Union.



Américo Maluana, CDD Program Coordinator

Américo Maluana spoke about training, qualifying and inspiring youth champions as change agents, who will be made up of members of youth-led organizations or associations. In this regard, he highlighted the need to define the actors that will allow the catalyzing of change.

Around 45 organizations or associations representing the three regions of the country will participate in training activities within the scope of the transformational leadership approach, with training in different skills linked to youth leadership and 12 of them will benefit from financial support to lead and develop initiatives with an impact on their communities. These activities will involve holding *workshops* on topics of interest to youth and debates on democracy and good governance.

“We are aware of the upcoming electoral context, so we believe that the project comes at an opportune moment to contribute to young people’s awareness of the importance of electoral and political participation”, stated Américo Maluana. As he highlighted, there will be the dissemination of lessons learned and best practices of interventions centered on youth, through the collection of documentation and dissemination in the media, campaigns, and advocacy events, cooperation with journalists and role models, as well as the creation of a digital platform to give greater visibility to the action and raise positive portraits of youth.



Deedar Guerra, President of the National Volunteer Council

Those present raised several questions and contributions. Deedar Guerra, President of the National Volunteer Council, asked about the opening of the project to host other initiatives with the same focus, to avoid duplication of efforts.



Eugénio Maposse, representative of the German Cooperation in the "Pro-Education" Program

Eugénio Maposse, representative of German Cooperation in the "Pro-Education" Programme, spoke about the possibility of cooperation in this program and touched on a very important aspect to be taken into account: collaboration with government entities, with emphasis on the Secretary of State for Youth and Employment, and the alignment of youth training processes with the private sector.



Nélio Zunguza, President of the Association of Finalist University Students

Along the same lines, Nélio Zunguza, representative of the Association of Finalist University Students of Mozambique, reiterated the need to train leaders of youth organizations and associations in management skills to guarantee the sustainability component of the project after its implementation.



Alexandre Mate, President of the Association of Young Deaf People in Mozambique

In turn, Alexandre Mate, who chairs the Association of Young Deaf People in Mozambique, asked about the inclusion of young people with disabilities in the "SOU JOVEM" project, particularly taking into account the difficulty in communication in the case of young people who are deaf and mute.



The clarification session was led by Nina Yengo and Américo Maluana, and by Luís Cuambe, Manager of the “SOU JOVEM” Project. “With the ‘SOU JOVEM’ project we do not intend to work like an island at any time, we are going to work with youth organizations”, underlined Luís Cuambe. The manager also explained that the theory of change involves training youth organizations so that they can train other organizations and, in this way, “we effectively have young people participating in the country’s democratic processes”.



Luís Cuambe , Project Manager “SOU JOVEM”



CDD. Juventude



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