

Empowering youth to build tolerant democracy and social cohesion in Gaza

Political intolerance

Political intolerance, particularly during election cycles, looms large as the most pressing barrier to democratic development and social cohesion in Gaza. During the last general elections, opposition members were harassed and detained, and political skirmishes broke out between party supporters causing physical and property harm in several districts. The violent assassination of Anastácio Matavele and the imprisonment of 18 members of Nova Democracia have shocked the conscience of many people and have not helped

towards democratic tolerance and social cohesion. It is worth noting that, for the case of last year's general elections, the ground for political intolerance and violence was set by the National Commission for Elections when they failed to bring a plausible explanation for the 329 430 additional potential voters they registered in Gaza. The involvement of huge numbers of youth in political skirmishes is an alarming signal pointing to a possible perpetuation of the landscape of intolerance, which, in turn, will continue to erode social cohesion in the province.

Socio-economic challenges

Gaza needs open spaces for democratic participation to harness the collective intellect and skills of its people in order to address their key socio-economic challenges. Although 80.89% of the population is below the age of 40 and 36.77% of the population is between the ages 15 and 40 years – a potential large labor force for the development of the province, 32.82% of this potential labor force cannot read and write. Of those that can read and write, only 19.79% have finished junior high school and higher levels – an indication that the vast majority (80.21%) of the literate and potential young labor force is not

skilled. In terms of employment, only about 57% of the population 15 years and older is employed, and about 63%¹ of these are in the agriculture sector, which is mostly agriculture of subsistence.

With 28.2% of women and 17.6% of men HIV positive, the province's overall 24.4% HIV prevalence among people 15-49 years of age is the highest in the country. Among youth 15-24 years, HIV prevalence is 15.9% for girls and 2.1% for boys, making the youth in Gaza the second most HIV/AIDS infected youth population in the country with 10% prevalence rate. Compounding an already difficult health situa-

¹ Author's own calculation based on data from the 2017 General Population Census accessed from <http://www.ine.gov.mz/iv-rgph-2017>

tion, Covid-19 poses another serious health risk in the province whose population is already debilitated by HIV/AIDS. The government and civil society organizations are implementing prevention strategies to avoid community transmission and contain the pandemic. Another serious challenge the government in Gaza is wrestling with is organized crime, especially animal poaching that has bloomed and beco-

me violent business in the Northern districts of the province.

The solution to these and many other problems including corruption, economic exclusion, lack of social accountability, high youth migration to Maputo and South Africa calls for an equal participation of all people of Gaza, especially youth who make up the largest population in the province.

Youth empowerment

To help promote political tolerance, the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD), supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – an American private, non-profit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world – will soon inaugurate its first in-site Youth Hub (YH) in Chókwè, which will be implemented under the “Promote Greater Youth Civic Engagement in Southern Mozambique” project. The main objectives of the project are to (i) boost youth civic engagement and political participation and (ii) prevent political manipulation of youth. The project is part of CDD Youth Leadership Enhancement Agency Development (LEAD), a nationwide program that seeks to empower youth as agents and catalysts of democratic transformation and inclusive governance through its Leadership Academy and Youth Hubs.

Run by young people and through face-to-face and online activities, the Youth Hub will reach and empower thousands of young men and women with transformational leadership content in the areas of social accountability, political tolerance and inclusion, socio-economic, democratic, and community leadership. The Hub will broadcast its activities through its Facebook and Youtube TV channels and local community radios and groom youth to hold their community and district government to account, to hold policy dialogues with political and administrative authorities, and other relevant stakeholders including at the community level and the private sector to find local solutions for their socio-economic challenges.

CDD has an informal center for justice in Chókwè led by the former Reconciliation and Response Committee (CRR) members and established to monitor violence-related conflicts in the October 2019 elections. It comprises religious leaders, justice authorities (the police, youth groups and local elders). This committee will provide much needed support for the activities of the Youth Hub.

As one of the first key steps, CDD will select and enroll three young people in its Youth Transformational Leadership Academy in Cabo Delgado where they will be trained in (1) civic and community leadership, (2) values and skills of transformational leadership, (3) democratic leadership, and (4) economic leadership. Once graduated, the master trainers will have the responsibility to run the Youth Hub and implement the following key activities.

- Conduct regular in-person and online civic awareness sessions in target schools and communities covering the same topics from the Leadership Academy
- Select and train some young people to create and run Youth Hub cells in strategic communities
- Hold social accountability sessions with local leaders including school principals, health facility directors and community leaders, as well as district leaders
- Hold policy dialogues with district leaders and the private sector

- Hold town hall meetings
- Disseminate Youth Hub activities through local community radios and the Youth Hub Facebook page

The overall outcome of the Youth Hub is to contribute towards political tolerance and social cohesion in the province through the specific outcomes below.

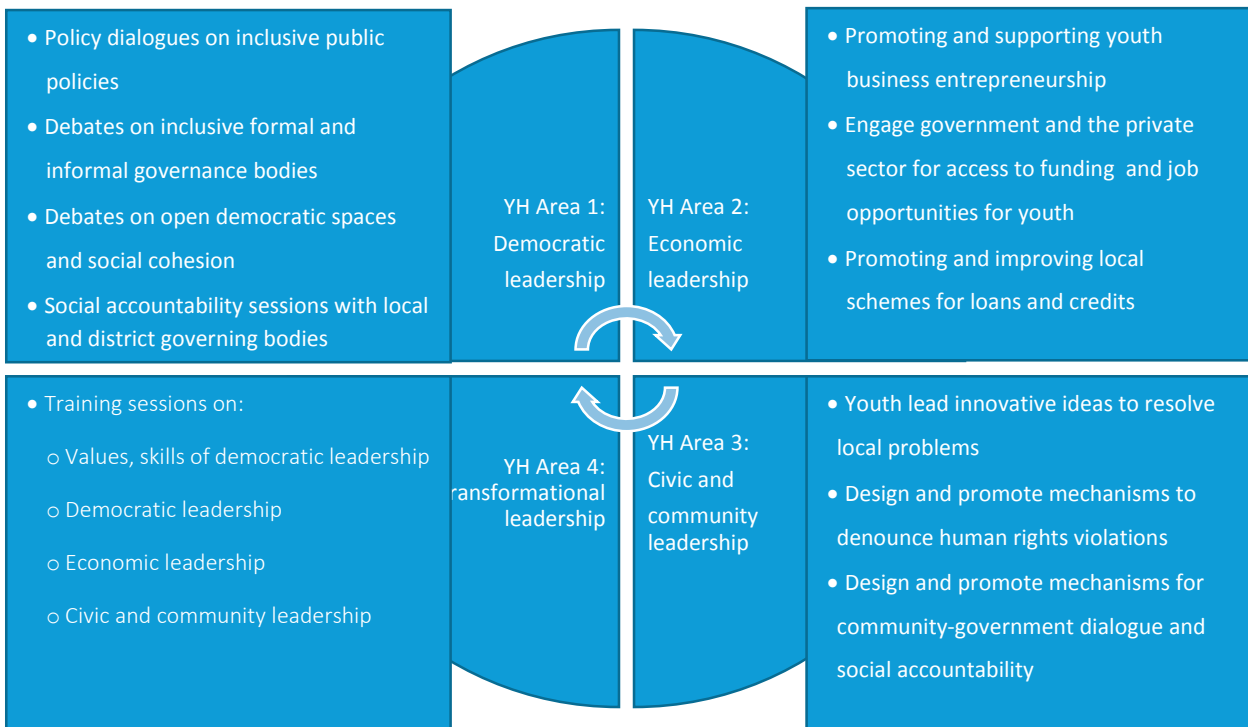
1. Reduced cases of political intimidation and violence
2. Increased number of young people from

diverse political backgrounds involved in local and district governance bodies

3. Increased number of young people who promote democratic values and governance in their communities
4. Increased number of young people from diverse political backgrounds who find satisfying socio-economic solutions to their challenges
 - Increased social accountability

The chart below summarizes the key activities of CDD Youth Hubs.

Youth Hub



Based in the economic hub of Gaza and one of the most important economic corridors in the Southern region connecting Maputo and Zimbabwe, The Youth Hub in Chókwè will play the leading role to build a social and transformational youth movement to promoting democratic governance, economic development and social

cohesion. It will promote, support and empower youth groups and other youth initiatives in other districts and serve as a bridge between these and other youth groups and initiatives in the country and elsewhere. Currently, CDD has 11 eleven online youth groups in equal number of districts involving more than 700 young people in Gaza.

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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para a Democracia e Desenvolvimento
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: Emídio Beula
Author: Julião Matsinhe
Team: Emídio Beula, Agostinho Machava, Ilídio Nhantumbo, Isabel Macamo, Julião Matsinhe, Janato Jr. and Ligia Nkavando
Layout: CDD

Address:
 Rua Eça de Queiroz, nº 45, Bairro da Coop, Cidade de Maputo - Moçambique
 Telephone: 21 41 83 36

 CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: http://www.cddmoz.org

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