



Credits: Deutsche Welle

## Anchoring Youth Empowerment in Transformational Approach For Social Cohesion in Northern Mozambique

### Context

Cabo Delgado, with its more than two million people, sits on the Northeastern Region of Mozambique where the waters of the Indian Ocean bathe its 430km-long coast. During the first years 30 years after the country's independence, Cabo Delgado was a calm province known for its crucial role in the struggle for the country's independence. Lately, the province has acquired an international reputation for holding vast natural resources including natural gas reserves and gems-

tones. As a result, the province has become the darling of big multinational and national companies investing their money as they vie for the wealth of the province. These national and international investors and the government improved key economic infrastructures and erected new ones; they made euphoric and promissory speeches on the economic improvement that the province was embarking on; as a result, they raised people's hopes and expectations.

## Social and economic challenges

Aside this meteoric macroeconomic rise, Cabo Delgado has languished at the bottom of development. According to the 2017 General Population Census data, 52% of girls and 53% of boys 10-14 years of age cannot read and write; 57% of women and 36% of men 15-39 years of age cannot read and write. Looking at the entire population five years and older, illiteracy rate in the province stands at 61% – 68% for women and 53% for men. Only 39% of the population five years and older can read and write.

Looking at employment data, 93% of women and 87% of men 15 years and older are peasants working in the agriculture of subsistence – an economic activity that barely produces enough for family consumption. Only 18% of this population – 11% of women and 25% of men – have some type of paid employment.

The province also faces serious social and health issues. For example, 34% of girls 12-19 years old live or did live in some type of a marital relationship, a clear indication that sexual abuse of minors, child marriage, sexual transmitted infections including HIV, and other sexual and reproductive health problems may be widespread. 13.8% of the population 15-49 years old is HIV positive – 15.7% among women and 11.4% among men. Among youth 15-24 years old, HIV prevalence rate is 9.7% – 11.9% among girls and 7.5% among boys.

A quick glance at the education, employment and health data on this article will show that women are far behind men in every social and economic area. They are less schooled (far much more women cannot read and write). They are

twice as fewer than men in paid employment. They are victims of sexual abuse. They bear the heavier portion of health challenges. Gender inequality in Cabo Delgado is an urgent social concern.

Cabo Delgado also faces the challenges of the military conflict and COVID-19. The worsening military conflict has destroyed villages, communities and social infrastructures in several districts. It has displaced more than 200,000 people and disrupted livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people exposing them to prolonged food insecurity and looming starvation. In addition to this, Cabo Delgado has been severely hit by COVID-19 and, in the context of the armed

conflict, preventing and containing the pandemic, as the local residents say, has become a second priority. Public opinion holds that the fast increase of COVID-19 cases in Nampula finds a plausible explanation in the big numbers of conflict-displaced people from Cabo Delgado who moved to Nampula for safety. Both Cabo Delgado and Nampula have transitioned to community transmission.

Furthermore, the porous borders and the inability of the state apparatus to control the vast coastal waters make the country a big transit point for drug trafficking networks to which marginalized and despondent young people are potentially easy preys. Government limitations to control effectively its borders and its coast facilitate illegal immigration, thus making the country, in general, and Cabo Delgado, in particular, the haven of illegal immigrants, terrorists and drug smugglers from neighboring and distant countries.

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## Youth Concern

Considering that 82.34% of the population is under the age of 40, the challenges highlighted above depict a suffering and unskilled young population. 51.5% among people 15-39 years old – 43% among young men and 59% among young women – have not finished a single school level. Only 11.38% of these young people (14.17% women and 8.78% men) have finished primary education.

In the wake of the ruby mining sector in Montepuez and the natural gas investment by multinational companies in Palma, youth in Cabo Delgado have often complained that companies do not hire them, preferring rather people from outside the province. In response, companies state that they hire outside the province whenever they cannot find qualified people in the province. For example, in May 2018, a group of local young people in Palma protested against lack of job opportunities in their district despite the boom of the natural gas industry<sup>1</sup>.

Seeing themselves economically excluded, their resources plundered and Cabo Delgado ravaged by wars, illegal immigration and drug trafficking, young people turned to social media to voice their frustration and demands for

change. In June this year, they promoted an on-line campaign with the slogan “Cabo Delgado is also Mozambique”. The campaign and many other messages, shared mostly by and among young people through social media, are the voice of youth demanding a change of course and an end to their social and economic woes “in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity” in Cabo Delgado.

In his famous “I have a dream” speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about “the fierce urgency of now” and warned against taking “the tranquilizing drug of gradualism” – the slow response to people’s concerns. Something meaningful and robust must be done, and it must be done now, to stop this ticking bomb from going off.

The key question is how the government and development practitioners can effectively respond to the legitimate demands of youth for social and economic inclusion.

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## Transformational Youth Leadership Enhancement and Agency Development (LEAD)

In partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), CDD will soon launch their Transformational Youth Leadership Enhancement and Agency Development (LEAD) program in Montepuez district. A youth tailored leadership empowerment program, LEAD

will influence, motivate and equip young people to believe in their individual and collective innovative power to transition from frantic job seekers and mere beneficiaries of services and corporate stipends to innovators and catalysts of inclusive development and transformational

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.civilinfo.org.mz/expectativas-aquem-da-realidade-os-jovens-e-as-oportunidades-de-trabalho-em-palma/>

change. LEAD seeks to place youth at the center of development endeavors by (1) enhancing their leadership for transformation capacities, and (2) increasing their effective engagement in local and national governance processes.

To enhance youth leadership for transformation capacities, LEAD has developed a Transformational Leadership Academy (TLA), which is a three-month hybrid-training program with online and on-site leadership classes. The academy will groom youth to become agents of inclusive development and its curriculum will focus on (1) Values and Skills of Transformational Leadership, (2) Economic and Development Leadership, (3) Democratic and Governance Leadership, (4) Civic and Community Leadership, and (5) Human Rights. To cap the training, TLA trainees will design and implement a leadership project and lead multidisciplinary stakeholders to address a community or district concern. The leadership project will transition trainees from the academy to the theater of development where, working as youth master trainers, they will build and lead a youth social movement to increase effective youth engagement in local and national governance processes.

LEAD has conceived Youth Hubs as the mechanism to increase effective youth engagement in local and national governance processes. Run by Youth Master Trainers and through face-to-face and online activities, the Youth Hub in Montepuez will reach and empower thousands of young people with transformational leadership content structured in four specific labs.

The Economic and Development Leadership lab will focus on promoting youth entrepreneurship in several economic areas including agri-

culture, ICT and services. It will also engage government agencies such as the Agência do Desenvolvimento Integrado do Norte (ADIN) and the private sector including the Montepuez Ruby Mining and the natural gas industry for the local youth to access decent jobs and funding opportunities for their startups. The Democratic and Governance Leadership lab will equip young people to advocate for inclusive and account-

able governance spaces and policies. The Civic and Community Leadership lab will advocate for key social issues such as gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and community resilience to issues such as drugs and violence. Finally, the Human Rights lab will focus on promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights.

•Below are the expected outcomes of the Youth Hub.

•Empowered and motivated youth transitioning from beneficiaries to catalysts of good governance.

•Social accountability and participatory planning that includes citizens' concerns in governance and development plans

•The private sector adopts affirmative action prioritizing qualified local youth for job and funding opportunities

- Social corporate responsibility funds are implemented transparently to promote inclusive local community development
- Youth and community with increased livelihoods and access to decent jobs, funds and means for innovative startups and self-employment
- Increased gender equality in access to governance spaces, services, jobs and funding opportunities.
- Increased respect for human rights and

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community resilience to violence, marginalization and exclusive governance.

Currently, CDD has an active online group in Montepuez that is interacts with other youth groups in the province, the northern region and in the whole country. The group has already participated in youth-led regional and national online discussions on social and economic issues of their concern and has helped raise awareness among youth nationwide about the impact of

COVID-19 and the military conflict in Cabo Delgado. They have also participated in youth-led online national campaigns, namely Stop Coronavirus and Cabo Delgado is Mozambique too and in an online regional discussion on youth and economic inclusion. Their online TV channel will play a key role to create a national youth web, to disseminate their activities across the country and beyond and to rally young people towards a youth-led movement for social cohesion in the province.



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