

ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Empowerment for a Youth Centered Democracy and Developmental Agenda



1. Context

On the occasion of the International Youth Day, the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) held, on August 12, a three-hour session led by young people to critically reflect on **"YOUTH: Economic Development and Democracy"**. Africa has the youngest population in the world with

more than 400 million young people aged between the ages of 15 to 35 years. Such a youthful population calls for democratic and socioeconomic developmental models which are anchored on the youth potential and perspectives. This was the purpose of the aforementioned session: to gauge the youth perspectives

on Economic Development and Democracy in Mozambique.

Consistent with African Union's strategic documents, mainly the African Youth Charter; Youth Decade Plan of Action; and the Malabo Deci-

sion on Youth Empowerment, all consolidated through African Union Agenda 2063, this discussion served as prologue for the launch of the **National Platform for Youth Participation and Empowerment: the CDD Youth Online TV**.

2. YOUTH: Economic Development and Democracy

The three-hour discussion was moderated by CDD Youth team and had four (04) speakers¹, namely Berta de Nazareth, Human Rights social activist and founder of 'Liberte-se'; Ivan Mazanga, representative of Renamo Youth League; Job Fazenda, lawyer, and university lecturer; and António Taula, National Youth Council (CNJ) representative. They are young leaders who stand out in the defense and promotion of democracy and economic development. The reflection also gathered, in the same room, representatives of different youth organizations led by young people.

During the discussion, young people presented, discussed, and defended their ideas, either agreeing or disagreeing. However, all were unanimous in stating that youth should be represented in all decision-making bodies on the life of the country, placing young people on the agenda for the promotion of democracy and economic development.

According to Berta de Nazareth, independence remains on the agenda of youth in Mozambique, as they still struggle for economic independence, employment, freedom of expression, eradication of gender-based violence, and women representation in decision-making processes.

Ivan Mazanga recalled that the problems of youth are the same problems the country face since the majority of the Mozambican society is

young people. In his perspective, the matters of young people are the problems of the Nation, and underdevelopment appears to be one of the most striking problems. In this context, the greatest challenge for youth and the Nation must be the fight and eradication of corruption, which will allow them to reach new heights so that the Mozambican youth can develop and be economically independent.

António Taula, another speaker, also supported the idea that talking about youth also means talking about the country, because Mozambique's population is young. In his understanding, the great challenge that young Mozambicans face is to find strategies so that their voices can be heard and have their problems solved.

In turn, the lawyer and university lecturer, Job Fazenda, argued that the common cause that should unite Mozambican youth is economic dependence, economic and sustainable development, peace, and the fight against corruption.

During the discussion, it became clear to everyone that the greatest wealth of Mozambique is not the natural, energetic and maritime resources that the country has, but the energetic socio-age group, the young people, that still has a lot to give. And for the Director of CDD, "it is in partnership with young people that we can fight corruption, develop and consolidate our democracy and generate an inclusive and sustainable development pattern in the country".

¹ And an audience, with all the COVID-19 social distance rules clearly respected.

3. National Platform for Youth Participation and Empowerment

It consists of *CDD Youth Online TV* to connect youth and boost their participation in local, provincial and national institutions. CDD understands that weak participation of youth in political life and governance of the country may be due to the fact that mainstream media does not communicate to young people. The use of Portuguese only to communicate official information, with little possibility for discussion and active participation, in local languages, exacerbates the exclusion and marginalization of youth, even in big cities like Maputo and provincial capitals.

The platform is based on social media, with programs that are conceived, produced and presented by young people, particularly girls, in a youth language with the aim of promoting youth empowerment for a more active participation in political life and governance, thus reducing marginalization and political exclusion.

At the moment, it has two experimental programs being broadcast every week:

- **'Women in Politics and Leadership'** is conceived and presented by a girl for an audience of girls. Its focus is on empowering girls for leadership and political participation. It is a 60-minute program broadcast, initially, in Portuguese, once a week with participants from the provinces. With time, it will broadcast in national languages and be able to reach more viewers.
- **'Youth in Action'** is oriented towards the empowerment of boys. It is conceived and presented by boys and it broadcasts once a week for 60 minutes, and it has interventions by young people from every province. It insists on the entrepreneurship of young people.

This platform is instrumental in the implementation of LEAD, the Transformational Youth Leadership Enhancement and Agency Development (LEAD) Program which is CDD flagship program materialized through the Transformational Leadership Academy and Youth Hubs.

Speaking at the opening of the session, the Director of CDD, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, said that "The strength of CDD is based on the potential of youth. The African continent and our country, in particular, remain very underdeveloped, not because of lack of resources, not because of lack of capacity, but because of how its governance neglects youth capacity. The quality of leadership we have prevents the best from young people to emerge to contribute to development", he said.

It is in this context that CDD launched *CDD Youth Online TV* platform. "CDD, in addition to its contribution to Human Rights, and Human Rights Defenders, and governance, with a focus on developmental policies, has strategic focus on youth. Today, youth are the catalyst and the real possibility of making use of the country's potential and natural resources, transforming them into wealth and well-being for the Mozambican population", he added.

CDD Youth Online TV platform, in its essence, aims to allow young people to have a space to share their ideas, perspectives and socio-economic and development projects without exclusion, opening space for more young people to participate in governance starting from school management, municipal governance and provincial institutions, and to the macro-level.

To achieve inclusive governance, inclusive growth, and, therefore, inclusive development, young people must be called upon, placing them at the center of development action and policy making. In fact, "governance process in our country must be centered on the transformative potential of young people with inclusiveness, particularly of girls", he stressed.


Adriano Nuvunga concluded his speech by challenging young people and urging them to take the lead in decision-making processes, promoting democracy and economic development. "Many people say that the future is in the hands of young people. No! I say, young people, the present is in your hands". CDD is here to contribute for your empowerment, for a youth centered developmental agenda.



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