



Government must seriously invest in youth resilience to violent extremism to avoid extending the conflict in Cabo Delgado

- At least two soldiers of the Mozambican Army died on Tuesday, April 5, during an attack by violent extremists against a position of the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) in the district of Nangade, north of Cabo Delgado¹. According to Carta de Moçambique, the FDS position targeted by the surprise attack was positioned in the village of Mandimba, in the north of the town of Nangade district. In addition to two deaths, four soldiers were wounded.



Credits: JPaulo Pimenta

¹ <https://cartamaz.com/index.php/sociedade/item/10371-terroristas-matam-dois-militares-em-ataque-a-posicao-das-fds-em-nangade>



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Despite the progress made with the arrival of foreign forces from Rwanda and SADC, security in northern Cabo Delgado remains a challenge. The districts of Macomia and Nangade have been experiencing frequent attacks by violent extremists. This is a situation that confirms the global experience that military operations alone are not sufficient to solve a problem of violent extremism, especially when the conflict is driven by socioeconomic deprivation, ethnic marginalization, and intra-religious frustrations-and influenced by illicit trade and organized crime-as is the case in Cabo Delgado².

Indeed, relying on military approaches alone is more likely to exacerbate conflict than resolve it. However, combined military operations can play an important role in setting the conditions for conflict resolution, particularly if they are carefully designed and executed according to a coherent strategy that includes resolution dialogue, development, and preventing and countering violent extremist initiatives³.

Prevention also involves strengthening community resilience to violent extremism, especially among young people to resist radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups. Indeed, a study published in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), entitled “Journey to Extremism in Africa: Motivation, Incentives, and the Turning Point for Recruitment,” shows that factors such as marginalization, lack of economic prospects, and possibilities for civic participation increase the vulnerability of young people to violent extremism⁴.

One way to reduce youth vulnerability to recruitment is to promote vocational training programs and create income generation and self-employment initiatives. However, the Government of Mozambique does not have any resilience to violent extremism programs targeting youth in Northern Mozambique. The Fund for Support to Youth Initiatives (FAIJ) is the only government program targeting young people, whose objective is to finance income generation

² https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Serie-de-Resolucao-de-Conflitos-Numero-4--Riscos-e-oportunidades_a-utilizacao-de-operacoes-combinadas-contra-o-extremismo-violento-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf

³ https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Serie-de-Resolucao-de-Conflitos-Numero-4--Riscos-e-oportunidades_a-utilizacao-de-operacoes-combinadas-contra-o-extremismo-violento-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf

⁴ <https://news.un.org/pt/story/2017/09/1594491-pobreza-e-privacao-empurram-jovens-para-o-extremismo-em-africa>

projects, “aimed at increasing employment and/or self-employment opportunities, developing management and savings culture, as well as youth participation in the country’s development”⁵.

Despite being approved in the mid-2020s, at the height of extremist attacks, this initiative is not sensitive to the phenomenon of violent extremism. That is, the criteria for access to the fund are valid in all provinces and do not take into account the specific context in which young people from Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa live. This Fund completely ignores the vulnerabilities of young people in northern Mozambique to radicalization and violent extremism, and treats them in the same way it treats young people from other provinces.

The only government fund supporting youth initiatives does not provide concrete incentives that can help discourage the radicalization of young people in northern Mozambique, as well as reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by violent extremist groups. Another option to consider would be the creation of a specific fund to serve the youth of Nampula, Niassa, and Cabo Delgado. The conditions for access to funding should be simplified to allow more young people lacking employment opportunities and economic prospects to join.

The Reconstruction Plan for Cabo Delgado (2021 - 2024), approved in September 2021 by the Council of Ministers at its 32nd Ordinary Session, gives priority to the construction and rehabilitation of public infrastructures, relegating socio-economic issues to the second plan. Now, in post-conflict reconstruction processes, the reconstruction of the torn socio-economic fabric is as important and necessary as the replacement of physical infrastructures. It turns out that the actions and initiatives foreseen for young people in Cabo Delgado’s Reconstruction Plan do not differ from those developed by the Secretary of State for Youth and Employment (SEJE) in other provinces.

For example, SEJE proposes, in the framework of Cabo Delgado’s reconstruction, to develop the following actions: Carry out dialogues that

stimulate the participation and integration of young people in patriotic actions for the promotion of peace, national unity and defense of sovereignty; Carry out initial, continuous professional training and the retraining of young people with a view to know-how - in an initial phase the bet will be through the Mobile Professional Training Units; Distribute self-employment kits in the scope of the “My Kit My Job Program”, in order to stimulate entrepreneurship and income generation for young people; Finance income generation projects for young people in the scope of support for youth initiatives; Carry out a contest for paid internships; Ensure 32 thousand pairs of uniforms in the scope of the “I am Capable Program”.

As can be seen, SEJE intends to replicate in the Cabo Delgado reconstruction plan the actions and initiatives that it has been developing in all provinces. There is no initiative that has been thought out and designed exclusively to meet the needs of young people living in environments affected by violent extremism. Budgeted at USD 300 million, the Reconstruction Plan for Cabo Delgado only foresees short (one year) and medium (up to three years) term actions, and notes that long term structural interventions (five and more years) will be programmed in territorial and sectoral planning instruments.

Furthermore, the Reconstruction Plan for Cabo Delgado refers to the Integrated Northern Development Plan, still under elaboration, the interventions that aim at a structural change in the north of Mozambique and “the integration of the youth through the productive social assistance model in which the beneficiaries no longer depend on subsidies and become self-sufficient”. The Integrated Plan for the Development of the North, currently under elaboration, will be the strategic plan of the Agency for the Integrated Development of the North (ADIN).

Created in March 2020 with the mandate to promote “multiform actions aimed at the socio-economic development of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula,” ADIN generated great expectations, particularly among the population

⁵ Despacho do Secretário de Estado da Juventude e Emprego, de 24 de Agosto de 2020, que aprova a revisão do Regulamento do Fundo de Apoio às Iniciativas Juvenis

residing in northern Mozambique. Two years after its creation, ADIN has not yet presented a single concrete initiative for the professional training of young people and/or financing of youth initiatives.

CDD argues that the Government should create specific programs to address the needs and

yearnings of young people living in northern Mozambique, a region affected by violent extremism. Therefore, the design of specific programs for youth in Northern Mozambique must always keep in mind the local dynamics that are conducive to violent extremism and vulnerability to recruitment.



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