



# PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CABO DELGADO

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## Conflict Resolution in Cabo Delgado: Opportunity for the achievement of sustainable peace\*

- The military response needs to be combined with dialogue at local, national, regional levels and should take as a starting point local voices and perspectives, particularly those of women and youth who are the most affected



Siphomana Malunga, Executive Director at OSISA

- Over four years since the violent attacks started in the north and just under a year since the deployment of the 1000-strong SADC (SAMIM) troops, the situation, militarily, seems to be relatively stable or stabilising compared to last year. Yet, we are seeing frequent attacks in Nangade and Macomia resulting in more people fleeing their homes and requiring humanitarian assistance. Conflict has now spread to the Southern part of Cabo Delgado.
- The Government of Mozambique working together with the SAMIM force, Rwandan forces and others seems to be enjoying some level success in the push back. But the province cannot be described as secure, and internal displacements remain very high.
- The Government has led the development of the first counter-terrorism strategy with inputs from international donors which it is said will be funded to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. The strategy has been adopted but there are no signs yet of implementation.
- The strategy, perhaps implicitly, goes some way in acknowledging the internal drivers of the conflict from what was initially framed as an externally driven invasion. This is a step in the right direction. At this stage, there is broad consensus that the conflict is driven by a multiplicity of factors including local dynamics such as socioeconomic inequality, youth marginalisation and disaffection, political and economic inclusion, unmet expectations from the gas industry, people being driven off their land to make space for gas development, among others. Conceding this reality is critical for the development of effective solutions.
- Through the strategy and other initiatives, the Government is pushing for reconstruction, infrastructure building, economic recovery and resolving the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs). At the moment, there are several plans afoot which don't necessarily speak directly to one another. An equally major challenge is the lack of clarity on civil society participation in these plans. This is a missed opportunity given the role that civil society plays, and the value that full participation would bring to these processes.
- There are questions as to whether this strategy is a genuine process or a means to solicit funding for reconstruction. Time and actions will tell. Regardless, we should acknowledge this as a positive step and give the Government space and support to implement the strategy.
- There is also a need to ensure that the implementing agency(ies) have the capacity to do the work that needs to be done and that such agencies enjoy trust from local populations. This will go a long way in giving credence to the work.
- Furthermore, civil society must play an active role in supporting the implementation, but equally importantly, in holding the government accountable and playing a watchdog role to ensure transparency, zero corruption and zero patronage as the roll out commences. This is much harder said than done given the reality of vested interests in the war economy, which will undoubtedly vie for space in the recovery efforts.
- As we talk about coordination, inclusivity and participation, we should inquire as to the role of the AU Peace and Security Architecture and its function going forward. To date, apart from endorsing the mission six months after the fact, it has taken a backseat but surely a greater and more productive role can be imagined? While we do acknowledge the disbursement of €2 million from the EU under the AU Rapid Response Mechanism, we believe that more can and should be done. And this is not to say we should discard the principle of subsidiarity but rather to suggest that there is joint action and support needed to finding lasting solutions



to insecurity in Northern Mozambique. This is particularly important because it isn't just SADC countries involved in supporting the effort on Northern Mozambique. The important role of the AU was recently, in April, highlighted by South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Troika (plus Mozambique).

- As we look ahead, there are other key considerations that we need to make if efforts to permanently end the conflict and rebuild are to be successful. Some of these are:
  - The military response needs to be combined with dialogue at local, national, regional levels. This dialogue should take as a starting point local voices and perspectives, particularly those of women and youth who are the most affected.
  - Major humanitarian assistance is required especially as a result of the internal displacement of thousands, including mental health and psychosocial support to those who have suffered and witnessed atrocities including rapes, killings, beheadings and kidnappings.
  - Youth marginalisation needs to be addressed with clear policies that seek to include young people in the economy and political spheres.
  - The proliferation of arms needs to be tackled with a coherent policy.
  - Corporations operating in the north have been accused of human rights abuses. There needs to be further and thorough investigation into this and the justice system must act. It cannot be that multinationals are given free rein to ride roughshod over the rights of local communi-

ties simply because they bring in foreign direct investment.

- Equally, violations by military actors such as sexual violence against women needs to be investigated and legally addressed.
- Human rights defenders, community leaders and civic actors are still being threatened for doing their work. The Government needs to speak out against this scourge and hold accountable its arms that are propagating such attacks, in the true spirit of democracy.
- A bigger conversation is needed around full scale security sector reform in Mozambique which considers democratic values and promotes a rights-based approach to governance of the sector. Accountability and civilian oversight are key components of such reform given that the conflict in the north has exposed the grave lack of accountability in the sector. Additionally, particular attention should be given to security and safety of women and girls in conflict areas given the specific risks they face around sexual violence [this is in line with our new Africa strategy].

There are also very specific actions and recommendations for the natural resource sector, which still can and should be a boon for Mozambique's economy, energy security and the economic inclusion of citizens.

- The concentration of natural resources in Northern Mozambique both acts as a driver for the conflict and raises the stakes when it comes to intervention.
- To date, development of the natural resource sector, particularly gas and minerals has been seen as elite-driven and exclusionary. This

has been particularly pronounced in areas where locals have been driven off their land to make way for capital projects that take away their livelihoods whether through farming or artisanal mining. This is at the centre of the crisis and needs to be acknowledged in any initiatives aiming to promote economic inclusion.

- There are also suggestions that the illicit economy flowing through the north, including drug trafficking, seems to have captured state institutions. The level at which this economy is now intertwined with the war economy has not been well researched. More studies need to be done on the money flows to inform the approach.
- There is no doubt that Mozambique's gas sector can contribute immensely to energy security, economic and social development for the whole country. It all depends on how the Government claws out of this current crisis and draws lessons from other regions that have experienced similar situations. The lessons are there, what is needed is a government fully committed to developing the industry in the interest of citizens, not elites.

Has the violent insurgency undermined Mozambique's democracy? Is Mozambique an open, closed or closing society?

- An admission that the conflict is local in nature and driven by factors that are themselves mainly local, is a concession that governance has a role to play. It is hard to dismiss claims that poor governance has

been part of the problem.

- Seemingly the conflict has been used as a further opportunity to close down civic space through the silencing of voices reporting on the situation and those working to hold government accountable. Violent extremism cannot be effectively addressed in this context.
- Equally, any and all initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict must take as a starting point civic voices. Citizens cannot be seen merely as passive recipients of government programmes. They carry knowledge, histories, experiences and insights that can ensure appropriate policies and programmes. Decentralisation is key. Inclusion and citizen participation are not optional extras but the core of intervention.
- We also do need to talk about how elections that lack in credibility and legitimacy; or electoral processes that are fully captured, lead to captured democracies and pave the way for insecurity.

The deployment of the SAMIM is historic and we must as the situation unfolds be drawing and documenting lessons for the future. The SADC region has enjoyed relative security for decades but the future may be very different. This experience should at the very least inform SADC level policies and actions on combatting violent extremism.

Finally, is it time for the Government of Mozambique to open channels of dialogue with the insurgents?

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