

Responsible business goes beyond legal compliance: human rights and inclusion as foundations for value creation

- Government, businesses, civil society and development partners discuss meaningful community participation, remedy and inclusion as essential to responsible and sustainable business, with a particular focus on Mozambique's extractive sector.



Group photo from the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights, held under the theme "Human Rights and Inclusion as Drivers of Value Creation"

Business investment plays an important role in Mozambique's economic development by creating jobs, generating public revenue and supporting local economies. Yet, particularly in the extractive sector, these

benefits do not always reach the communities living near project sites. Concerns persist over access to land, resettlement, working conditions and the effects on household livelihoods. These issues were central to a dialogue held in

Maputo on 7 October 2026, bringing together government representatives, businesses, civil society and development partners. Speakers argued that responsible business requires more than legal compliance or public commitments. Communities must be heard before decisions affecting their lives are made. Businesses must prevent and remedy harm arising from their activities, while ensuring that women, young people and other frequently excluded groups can participate in and benefit from economic opportunities.

The Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) convened this third edition of the Di-

alogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights under the theme “Human Rights and Inclusion as Drivers of Value Creation”. The event formed part of the EU-funded Citizenship, Business and Human Rights Programme (CNDH-MOZ), implemented by a consortium comprising CDD, the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD), the Forum of Mozambican Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FAMOD), CARO and Fanelo Ya Mina. It provided an opportunity for stakeholders to consider together how business can become more responsible and inclusive, deliver tangible benefits for communities and uphold human rights.

Economic growth must respect human rights and deliver benefits for communities



High-level opening panel at the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights, held under the theme “Human Rights and Inclusion as Drivers of Value Creation”

A shared concern emerged in the opening remarks from government, CDD and development partners. While recognising the importance of private investment to Mozambique's economic growth, speakers stressed that business practices must respect human rights, promote inclu-

sion and ensure that communities share in the wealth generated. They also called for stronger public institutions, better relationships between businesses and communities, and a national policy framework that clearly assigns responsibilities to the different actors.

Wietze Sijtsma of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands links respect for human rights to a stronger business environment and development



Wietze Sijtsma, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Mozambique, delivering his opening remarks at the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights

Wietze Sijtsma, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Mozambique, argued that respect for human rights and business success should not be seen as competing objectives. They can reinforce one another: responsi-

ble business conduct, supported by strong institutions and predictable rules, creates better conditions for lasting investment.

Sijtsma stressed that economic growth should bring opportunities for inclusion and tangible benefits for communities. His remarks emphasised the need for an investment environment in which business responsibility and human rights protection are integral to sustainable development.

CDD Executive Director Prof. Adriano Nuvunga calls for investment to be judged by its benefits for communities



Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD), delivering his opening remarks at the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights

Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of CDD, argued that the success of an investment should be assessed through its benefits for workers and host communities, as well as company profits and the volume of capital mobilised. Respect for human rights must inform business decisions on working conditions, supplier relationships, access to land and the treatment of affected populations.

Communities, he said, should have a meaningful role in investments taking place in their

areas. He called for stronger civil society participation in dialogue and decision-making, so that businesses and public institutions take community concerns into account. He also highlighted the importance of supporting local suppliers, building communities' productive capabilities and creating opportunities that can continue to generate income after projects close.

Nuvunga called for the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, with clear priorities, institutional responsibilities, resources and monitoring arrangements. Investment, he emphasised, should help improve people's lives as well as contribute to economic growth.

EU Head of Cooperation Paula Vázquez Horyaans highlights inclusion and gender equality as essential to sustainable investment



Paula Vázquez Horyaans, representative of the European Union Delegation to Mozambique, during the opening session of the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights

Paula Vázquez Horyaans, Head of Cooperation of the European Union in Mozambique, reaffirmed the EU's commitment to responsible investment that creates economic opportunities without compromising the rights of workers and communities. She highlighted the need to tack-

le discrimination, promote decent working conditions and ensure that the benefits of business activity are shared more inclusively.

Gender equality, inclusion and dialogue with communities, she stressed, belong at the centre of business management. They help identify risks, prevent conflict and build trust between investors and communities. She called for a coherent national policy framework that connects economic growth with human rights protection and opportunities for different social groups.

Cláudio Mate identifies gaps in oversight, community consultation and access to remedy, calling for adoption of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights as a first step



Cláudio Mate, National Director for Citizenship and Human Rights at the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, representing the Government of Mozambique, delivering his remarks during the opening session of the third edition of the Policy Dialogue on Responsible Business and Human Rights

Speaking on behalf of the Government of Mozambique, Cláudio Mate, National Director for Citizenship and Human Rights at the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, recognised responsible business conduct as an

important condition for safer, more predictable and lasting investment. Human rights protection, he argued, is part of the responsibilities that accompany investment, rather than an obstacle to business.

Mate drew attention to continuing difficulties in enforcing the law, particularly in mineral extraction, access to land and large infrastructure projects. He identified weaknesses in community consultation, barriers to accessing grievance mechanisms and remedy, and limited enforcement of human rights protections.

He called for the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to be updated to reflect the realities of business activity in Mozambique. In particular, he highlighted the need to

strengthen protection for women, young people and persons with disabilities, ensuring that their rights are addressed in business policies and practices.

Ivete Espada of OHCHR calls for businesses to prevent human rights harm and ensure access to remedy for affected communities



Dialogue panel addressing the challenges of protecting community rights and ensuring corporate accountability. From left to right: Ivete Espada (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR), Regina Macuácuá (Kenmare Mozambique), Décia Madede (National Human Rights Commission), Egas Jossai (journalist), and Prof. Adriano Nuvunga (Executive Director of CDD).

Ivete Espada of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) explained that businesses contribute to economic development, but their activities can also affect the rights of workers and communities. Respect for human rights must therefore be embedded in how businesses operate, rather than

addressed only when disputes or complaints arise. She introduced the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, built on three pillars: the State duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and access to effective remedy for those affected.

Legal compliance and corporate social responsibility policies do not, on their own, demonstrate that a business respects human rights. Companies need to understand the risks their activities pose to people and take action to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts. Espada highlighted human rights due diligence as an ongoing process through which businesses identify risks, prevent adverse impacts and track the ef-

fects of their operations, from investment planning through implementation.

Espada paid particular attention to land acquisition and resettlement, especially where projects directly affect families' living conditions. Communities should receive clear, timely infor-

mation, be consulted before decisions are taken, and have access to grievance mechanisms and remedy when their rights are adversely affected. She also called for the protection of groups in vulnerable situations and for businesses to give proper consideration to community concerns.

Panel examines community rights and corporate accountability

The panel, "Doing Business Beyond Compliance", brought together different perspectives on ensuring that business respects human rights. Participants discussed company experience, community

concerns and the difficulties facing oversight institutions. Community consultation, resettlement and remedy featured prominently, alongside the need for investment to improve living standards.

Kenmare's Regina Macuácuá calls for communities to be consulted before mining decisions are taken

Regina Macuácuá of Kenmare Mozambique explained that dialogue should begin before mining operations start, allowing communities to understand the anticipated impacts and raise their concerns. She described cases in which community consultations had led to changes in mining plans, particularly where sites of significance to

communities, such as cemeteries, were involved. Resettlement remained one of the greatest challenges, she acknowledged, because compensation does not always restore everything families lose. Companies should therefore maintain close engagement with communities, listen to grievances and seek solutions before problems escalate.

Dércia Madede of the National Human Rights Commission raises concerns over inadequate compensation and barriers to remedy

Dércia Madede of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) shared concerns identified through monitoring in Nampula, Manica and Cabo Delgado. Some families affected by business projects, she explained, receive very small compensation payments that do not adequately reflect their losses. Many communities also struggle to lodge complaints and obtain responses. She called for close monitoring of resettlement and compensation, including identifying affected households, verifying payments and checking that commitments are honoured. Limited staffing and funding constrain the Commission's oversight capacity, she acknowledged, making closer cooperation among public institutions, companies and civil society necessary.

University lecturer Dr. Luís Bitone stresses that schools and scholarships cannot replace respect for human rights

Luís Bitone challenged the assumption that corporate social responsibility initiatives are sufficient evidence of responsible conduct. Building schools, offering scholarships and supporting community initiatives are valuable contributions, but they do not release businesses from their responsibilities to respect workers' rights, protect the environment

and remedy harm caused by their operations. A company can meet every legal requirement and still fail to earn community trust, he noted. Consultations must give communities a meaningful opportunity to participate, and business commitments must lead to demonstrable results, particularly in preventing harm and protecting human rights.

Civil society representative Marta Licuco raises concerns over absent companies and unanswered community grievances

Marta Licuco of the Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network brought the concerns of communities living in natural resource extraction areas, particularly in Cabo Delgado, into the discussion. Civil society organisations often seek to create opportunities for dialogue, she explained, but companies and public authorities do not always participate. Their absence makes solutions harder to

reach and leaves concerns unresolved. Even where companies have grievance mechanisms, communities do not always obtain effective responses. Licuco called for greater openness to dialogue, fulfilment of commitments and community participation in decisions affecting their lives. Investment should also be judged by the improvements it brings to living conditions.

Investigative journalist Egas Josai calls for greater openness and transparency on business impacts

Egas Josai highlighted the importance of information in relationships between businesses, communities and the wider public. Journalists and communities face difficulties obtaining information about business activities, particularly their social and environmental impacts. A lack of

clear information can deepen uncertainty, hinder scrutiny and weaken communities' ability to demand answers. He called on companies to share information more openly and recognise the media's role in reporting on matters of public interest and promoting transparency.

Community consultation must influence decisions and lead to responses

The wider discussion raised concerns about how companies engage with communities, particularly during land acquisition, resettlement and compensation. Participants called for consultations that allow people to be heard and their concerns to inform decisions, rather than serving simply as a procedural requirement.

Participants also raised workers' rights, discrimination against women, sexual and reproductive rights, and the difficulties of overseeing large projects. Unanswered community grievances were another concern, compounded by the limited capacity of public institutions and civil society organisations to follow up on cases.

The discussion included a proposal to establish mechanisms for assessing companies' human rights performance. Responding to participants, Ivete Espada highlighted young people's access to information, Regina Macuácuá stressed inclusive consultation, and Dércia Madede acknowledged the need to strengthen institutional

monitoring capacity.

Closing the discussion, CDD Executive Director Prof. Adriano Nuvunga called for these dialogues to extend to provincial and district levels, bringing companies and institutions into closer contact with the communities directly affected by investment.

From dialogue to action on responsible business in Mozambique

The discussion identified a central challenge: turning corporate commitments into practices that improve community life. Participants called for the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to be updated, adopted and implemented, clarifying responsibilities and improving coordination among the State, businesses and civil society.

Businesses must also identify and prevent human rights risks before problems arise. Community consultations should take place before decisions are made, with clear information and

meaningful participation, including women, young people and persons with disabilities.

The meeting also emphasised the need for more effective grievance mechanisms and access to remedy. A channel for lodging complaints is only useful if communities are heard, receive responses and see commitments fulfilled.

Participants called for investment to be assessed through the jobs it creates, the opportunities it offers local businesses, its respect for human rights and its contribution to better living conditions, alongside its financial performance.





**MISSÃO:**

Inspirar e impulsionar acções para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.

MISSION:

Inspiring and driving actions to protect human rights, strengthen democracy, and promote justice.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para Democracia e Direitos Humanos
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
Authors: CDD
Layout: CDD

Address:
Rua Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
Telefone: +258 21 085 797

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

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