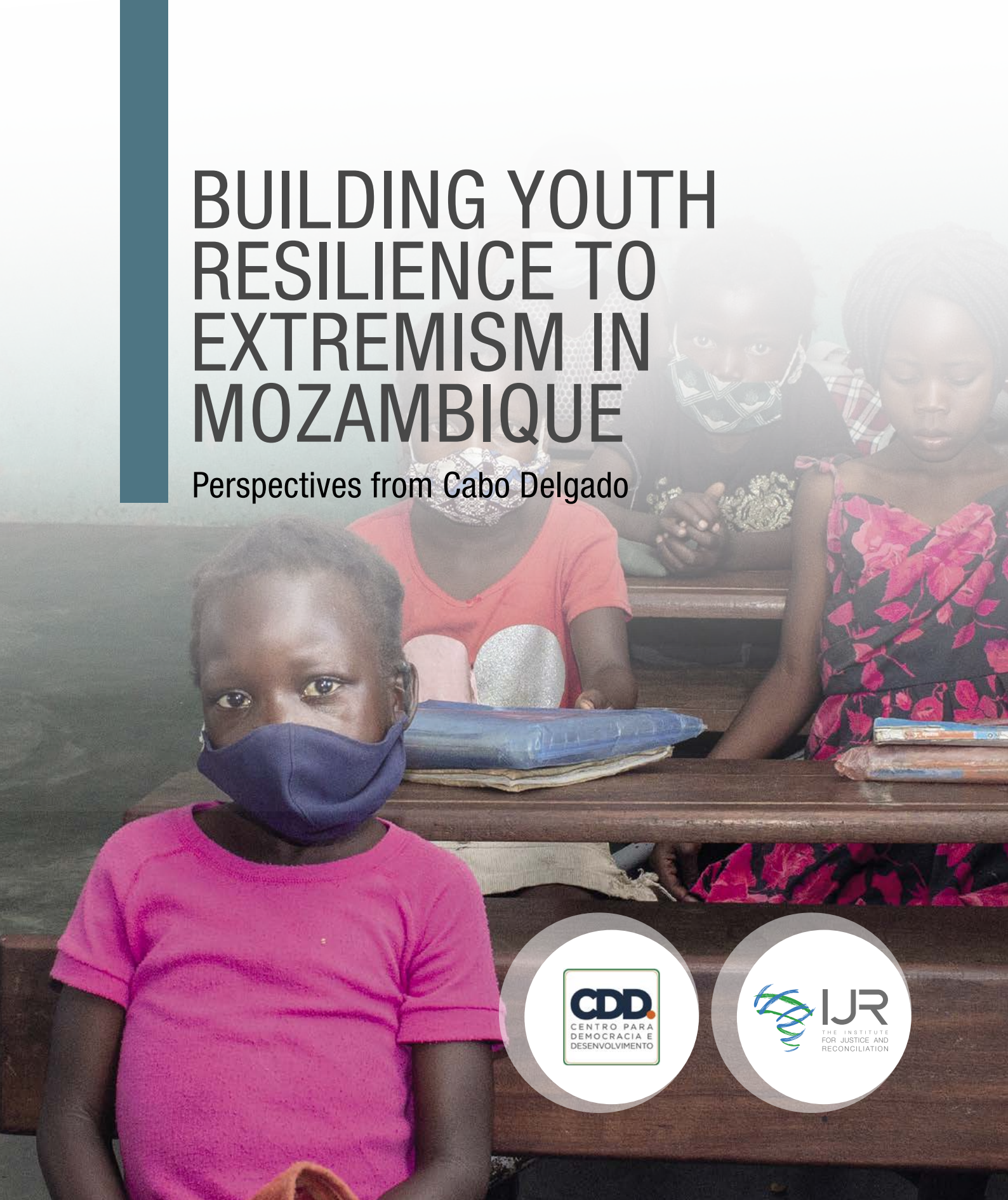


BUILDING YOUTH RESILIENCE TO EXTREMISM IN MOZAMBIQUE

Perspectives from Cabo Delgado





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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADIN	Northern Integrated Development Agency
ASWJ	Ahlu-Sunna Wa-Jama'a
AU	African Union
AU-OYE	AU Office of the Youth Envoy
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
HDI	Human Development Index (HDI)
ICG	International Crisis Group
IJR	Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
IS	Islamic State
PRIO	Peace Research Institute of Oslo
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The youth are disproportionately at risk from extremism, particularly in situations where they have little to lose. In Mozambique, the challenges of poverty, unemployment, low levels of participation in governance and the lack of inclusive development are stark. The violent conflict waged by the Islamist group Ahlu-Sunna Wa-Jama'a continues to threaten the country, with potential spillover effects for the region. This paper details the findings of two focus groups held with youths in Cabo Delgado and is complemented by findings from the latest national Afrobarometer survey data from Mozambique, which was collected in the second half of 2021. Youths were questioned about their perspectives on the insurgency, the drivers of extremism and means of building resilience. Overwhelmingly, material factors came to the fore as drivers of youth extremism, while religion was only mentioned in terms of the manipulation of insurgents

promising food and employment and adapting religious texts. Safety and security, politics and governance, and social cohesion were other key factors that were cited. For youth, it is critical that they be better engaged in conversations with local officials over issues of employment and skills development, education and so on. Moreover, youth also yearn for greater involvement in peace and security discussions, noting that at present they are only engaged during election time. While the North Integrated Development Agency (ADIN) develops its strategy for the region, it is important that youth perspectives are included in the conceptualisation of projects from the outset, and that more is done to engage the youth in the peace and security arena. 'Soft' approaches to peacebuilding are also as critical as 'hard' approaches, meaning that a larger focus must be placed on dialogue and youth inclusion in politics, peace and security.



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT

Mozambique's ongoing conflict, waged by the Islamist group Ahlu-Sunna Wa-Jama'a (ASWJ), is expected to continue for at least three more years, according to newly appointed Mozambican defence minister Cristóvão Chume.¹ This is optimistic, as the ongoing and lengthy past experiences in Lake Chad, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa have shown. Following the tactical and operational failures by private military groups to contain the insurgency, troops from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have now joined the Mozambican government in its operations. At the time of writing, there have been 3 415 estimated fatalities from organised political violence since the onset of insurgent attacks which began in 2017, and the militarised approach is unlikely to quell its multiple causes – among them grievances and marginalisation of the population.²

The ASWJ has grown in size and stature, with attacks on key infrastructure and transport roots. The group has links to the

Islamic State (IS), although the extent of this is unknown. However, what is clear is that the growth of the rebellion has succeeded due to the recruitment of ordinary Mozambicans, disenfranchised with the government and their opportunities for the future. Indeed, Afrobarometer data shows that, when asked where support for extremist activity stems from, one in three (32%) people believe Islamic groups support the ASWJ, followed by local people (24%), political parties (21%) and private companies (16%).³

The youth are particularly at risk of being drawn into the insurgency due to high unemployment, disruptions to education and an economy that offers little in the way of job prospects. A correlation has been shown between violence and income inequality, which provide fertile ground for recruitment by extremists.⁴ Yet at the same time, the youth can be a positive force for change by challenging undemocratic practices and working as peacebuilders within their community.

This research report unpacks youth perspectives on the insurgency, based on the findings of two focus groups held in September 2021 in Pemba and Montepuez. The research and resulting report are the joint collaborative efforts of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), based in Cape Town, South Africa, and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), based in Maputo, Mozambique. It also draws on the findings of Afrobarometer data from 2021. Afrobarometer is Africa's leading continental public opinion source. Unfortunately, insecurity prevented Afrobarometer survey teams from completing data collection in rural Cabo Delgado but statistics are used to contrast national youth perceptions to those collected from Cabo Delgado via the focus group discussions.

Interestingly, youth across the country report similar perceptions around poor governance, voter despondency, corruption and employment prospects.

The paper first outlines the methodology used for the focus groups, and then examines the drivers of extremism, followed by an analysis of how these factors apply to the Mozambican context. The findings of youth perspectives in Cabo Delgado are discussed under five themes: material drivers, manipulation of religious and ethnic identities, safety and security, politics and governance, and social cohesion. The report concludes with recommendations on ways to strengthen youth resilience within the ambit of national, subregional and regional frameworks.



METHODOLOGY

In developing the methodology for this research, two main objectives were identified:

1. To identify the push and pull factors of extremism in youth in Mozambique; and
2. To determine factors that strengthen the resilience of youth in resisting extremism in Mozambique.

From this, a detailed methodology document was drawn up, with definitions, key principles for conducting the research, a literature review on the drivers of extremism, as well as a list of questions to guide the research. The IJR developed the methodology, while the CDD supported the operational and logistical aspects of the focus groups, using their already established networks and youth hubs in Cabo Delgado. Local authorities were informed ahead of time to facilitate these engagements.

This research used the following definition of violent extremism: ‘Violent extremism is a violent type of mobilisation that aims to elevate the status of one group, while excluding or dominating its “others” based on markers, such as gender, religion, culture and ethnicity. In doing so, violent extremist organisations destroy existing political and cultural institutions, and supplant them with alternative governance structures that work according to the principles of a totalitarian and intolerant ideology.’⁵ In short, violent extremism is a method to pursue political and social change goals. Radicalisation was defined as the process of adopting these ideas, while understanding that this does not necessarily lead to violence. The term ‘resilience’ is often contested, with a variety of meanings coming from different disciplines, but is most broadly understood as ‘the ability to manage, withstand and recover from shocks’.⁶

The literature review identified a number of documents on the drivers of extremism, such as the 2015 United Nations (UN) Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism,⁷ a report by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) entitled *The Journey to Extremism*,⁸ and recent research that tested the assumptions of extremism using data from the World Values Survey.⁹ Useful questions for research developed by a network of practitioners on violent extremism, known as RESOLVE, were also used as guidance.¹⁰ From this, four categories of questions were drawn up: socio-economic, political, identity-based and psychological. Questions pertaining to resilience were also developed. These semi-structured interviews were used as guides, but the methodology also allowed for more free-flowing discussion.

From the outset, key principles of engagement were outlined for the focus groups, namely the inclusion of Chatham House rules throughout the events¹¹ and the principle of 'do no harm'.¹² As such, an effort was made not to re-traumatise victims, and questions were geared to be forward looking and non-divisive. In some cases, youth participants were shy, and the traumatic past experiences were evident. One participant had seen their family brutally killed by extremists, while others had been in families that had accommodated some of those

displaced during the conflict. Some families had also provided financial support to victims. The facilitator made sure not to pre-emptively draw out these experiences and to be sensitive to this trauma.

The two youth focus groups took place on 12 and 14 September 2021 in Pemba City, and on 15 and 16 September 2021 in the District of Montepuez. The age range of the focus group participants was 16 to 29, with varying levels of education.¹³ In Pemba City, there were 26 participants on the first day and 16 on the second.¹⁴ In Montepuez, 27 youths participated on the first day, and 26 on the second.¹⁵ Participants were selected by local focal points in contact with the CDD.

During the discussions, attention was paid to gender equality. A variety of ways were used to encourage women to speak. The facilitator also called on quieter participants to contribute. Youths from diverse religions and ethnicities participated in the discussions, including Christians, Muslims, makuas, makondes and mwanis. Questions were elaborated on when required and translated into local languages (makhwa, maconde, mwani and swahili) by local interpreters. Sessions were broken up by breaks and the singing of local songs. Answers were recorded with the express permission of the participants and solely for the purposes of transcription.



DRIVERS OF YOUTH EXTREMISM AND THE MOZAMBIKAN CONTEXT

Across the globe and despite wide geographic dispersion, youth involvement in violent extremist networks has become common. Evidence from various sources finds that violent extremist networks are often disproportionately characterised by youth participation.¹⁶ In particular, a UN report concluded that jihadism is ‘almost exclusively’ associated with males 24 years and younger.¹⁷ Boko Haram is also known for recruiting children for operational purposes,¹⁸ likely because they are easier to manage and require less in terms of resources or maintenance.¹⁹

One explanation for the disproportionate participation of youth within these groups is that youth differ from adults when applying a cost-benefit analysis – youth stand to gain more from social change but also have the least to lose in terms of family, social assets and career trajectory.²⁰ Put differently, the opportunity cost for participating in a violent extremist network is likely much less for youth than

for adults in instances where individuals perceive social change as desirable.

Youth account for one in four people around the globe and, of these, nearly nine in ten reside in the developing world.²¹ In 2020, Africa was not only the ‘youngest continent’ with a median age of 19.7 but also home to 22.7% of the world’s youth.²² About one billion Africans are under 35 years old, millions living in harsh conditions. According to a report by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, young Africans face high levels of unemployment (often because of skills mismatch within the labour market), poor living conditions and perpetual fears of economic instability.²³ Worryingly, large portions of young Africans also believe that the government does not care about their needs. This might in part be explained by the age chasm between the ‘young continent’ and its political leaders. At the start of 2021, the average age of African heads of state was 62 years old,²⁴ approximately 42 years older than the continent’s median age.

Mozambique's youth bulge intersects with a country that is beholden to a neopatrimonial state and poor economic outcomes. Just over half (52%) of Mozambique's population is younger than 18 years; the median age of the population is 17.6 years,²⁵ while President Nyusi is 62 years old. According to the 2021 Afrobarometer survey,²⁶ six in ten (61%) Mozambicans support a maximum age limit for presidential candidates, with the largest portion of people saying it should be 60 years. Cabo Delgado is particularly populous with youth. Disconnect from political leadership is often found to be a driver of violent extremism. These realities are important in understanding the propensity of young people to join violent extremist groups. The drivers of extremism are complex and include various contextual factors such as a scarcity of socio-economic opportunities, marginalisation and unresolved conflicts.²⁷

A seminal UNDP report, titled *The Journey to Extremism*,²⁸ identified that in Africa, economic factors such as poverty and unemployment are inseparable from extremism. A lack of governance is also associated with a higher incidence of extremism. Afrobarometer data collected in Mozambique in 2021 shows that other youth grievances include dissatisfaction with government performance on job creation (62%). One in three young people also feel that the country's economic condition is 'very or fairly bad' (30%) and a similar portion of youth assess that their personal living conditions are bad (33%).²⁹

In the UNDP report, 71% of those surveyed said that government action such as killing or arresting a family member had turned people to extremism.³⁰ Additionally, a 2019 study by Promundo-US found a direct link between

nations with a youth bulge and state repression.³¹ These findings have direct implications on the militarised approach being taken by the Mozambican government. UNDP research, in collaboration with the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), found that terrorism is linked to political and domestic violence, low levels of education, and low levels of confidence in government. Those who believe that living in a democracy is important are also more likely to justify terrorism.³² Taking advantage of societal deficits where youth feel socially, economically and politically marginalised, extremist groups like the IS are known to promise young recruits employment, good marriages and social advancement.

Further evidence from the research for this report suggests that recruitment is more common within traditionally marginalised communities where there might be little exposure to other religious or ethnic groups, and where low levels of human development in terms of education and literacy are common. In Cabo Delgado, life for young people is not only shaped by a disconnect from structures of governance but also by harsh material realities. According to UNICEF, Mozambique has some of the world's worst social indicators for youth, owing largely to barriers in accessing resources and services.³³ Cabo Delgado is one of Mozambique's poorest regions, characterised by high unemployment, economic marginalisation and human development deficits, including the highest illiteracy rate in the country (67%).³⁴ It is also home to a thriving illicit economy. The young in Cabo Delgado have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, with about 336 000 children being displaced from their homes.³⁵

In 2015, the UN released its Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.³⁶ The Plan recognises that the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has often overlooked the conditions that are conducive to violent extremism, as well as its prevention, with a larger focus on countries' abilities to

combat terrorism. As such, it is imperative that understanding the drivers of youth extremism be a task undertaken with an informed and nuanced understanding of the social, economic and political cleavages at play within marginalised communities.



YOUTH REALITIES IN CABO DELGADO: LOCALISED DRIVERS OF EXTREMISM

This section examines the drivers of extremism according to the findings of the focus groups held with youths in Cabo Delgado. Responses have been clustered into themes for analysis.

Material drivers (inclusive economic development)

Material considerations, as noted earlier, are significant drivers of violent extremism. Often, youth recruitment and radicalisation take advantage of economic marginalisation, a scarcity of opportunity and low levels of human development. In the focus group discussions, youth in Cabo Delgado most often cited economic realities as drivers of extremism in the area.

When it comes to recruitment, desperation stemming from persistent poverty was a leading push factor cited by participants. This is largely owing to the high prevalence of unemployment among youth. In some instances, youth noted that unemployment not only perpetuates cycles of poverty and

deprivation but also leaves many young people feeling frustrated and more willing to take radical action that they believe might improve their circumstances. From the discussions, it became apparent that many youth unsuccessfully seek out entry level or unskilled job opportunities, and believe they are being systematically denied income-earning opportunities. Expectations of the youth are often focused on the large projects of the extractive industries in Cabo Delgado, but they lack the levels of education and skills needed to work in this sector.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also deepened the economic grievances in Cabo Delgado. With restrictions on economic activity to help prevent the spread of the virus, income-earning opportunities are further limited. As in many other regions with a high reliance on the informal sector, Cabo Delgado's vulnerable population has been pushed even further towards the margins of economic inclusion. Youths said that this had the effect of forcing small businesses to

close, causing a widespread loss of income and increased hunger among their communities. All these factors intensify the weak spots among youth that ASWJ seeks to exploit.

These youth perspectives are echoed by broader national perceptions, with one in four people (24%) saying that people join the insurgency for ‘personal enrichment’ and 13% saying people join to escape poverty.³⁷

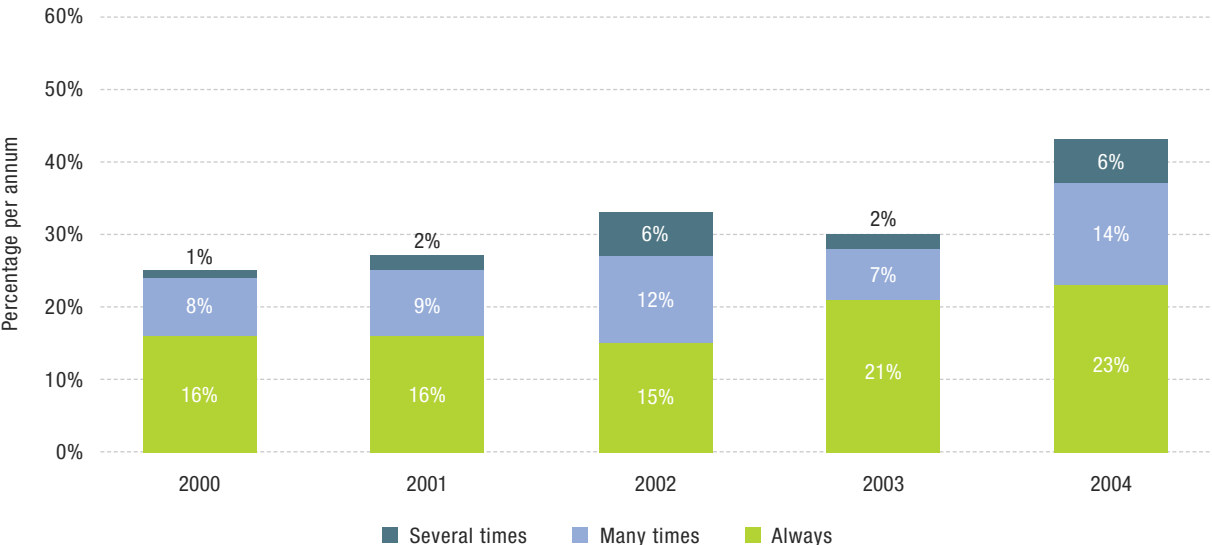
One participant from Pemba said that ASWJ even used promises of food and money to entice young people into mosques where manipulated religious messages were being preached. This reaffirms findings from a Global Initiative study that reported instances where business loans were used to attract youth to certain mosques where ASWJ were operating from.³⁸

Another material push factor is hunger, which is not only noted by youth to be widespread but also a means to lure young people into the

arms of ASWJ. Indeed, Afrobarometer data across the last decade shows that Mozambicans aged between 18 and 25 years are increasingly experiencing food shortages. In 2008/2009, one in four youths (25%) reported going without food either ‘several times’, ‘many times’ or ‘always’, compared to almost one in two (43%) in 2021 (Figure 1). Worryingly, youth who go without food ‘many times’ nearly doubled over the decade (8% vs 14%).³⁹

Another prominent material driver is the human development deficits within society. According to the UNDP, human development is about ‘expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people.’⁴⁰ In the 2020 Human Development Index (HDI), Mozambique ranked 181 out of 189 countries, losing as much as a third of its HDI score when adjusted for inequality.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, youths repeatedly

FIGURE 1: HOW OFTEN DO YOUTH GO WITHOUT FOOD?



Source: Afrobarometer, author’s own calculations

Note: Responses from Mozambicans aged 18–25 years.

cited various human development deficits, including education deficits and illiteracy, as reasons for young people joining ASWJ. However, they also alluded to the worrying trend of young Mozambicans with educational qualifications not being able to find work. The scarcity of opportunities is creating a sense of hopelessness among the youth. One respondent commented:

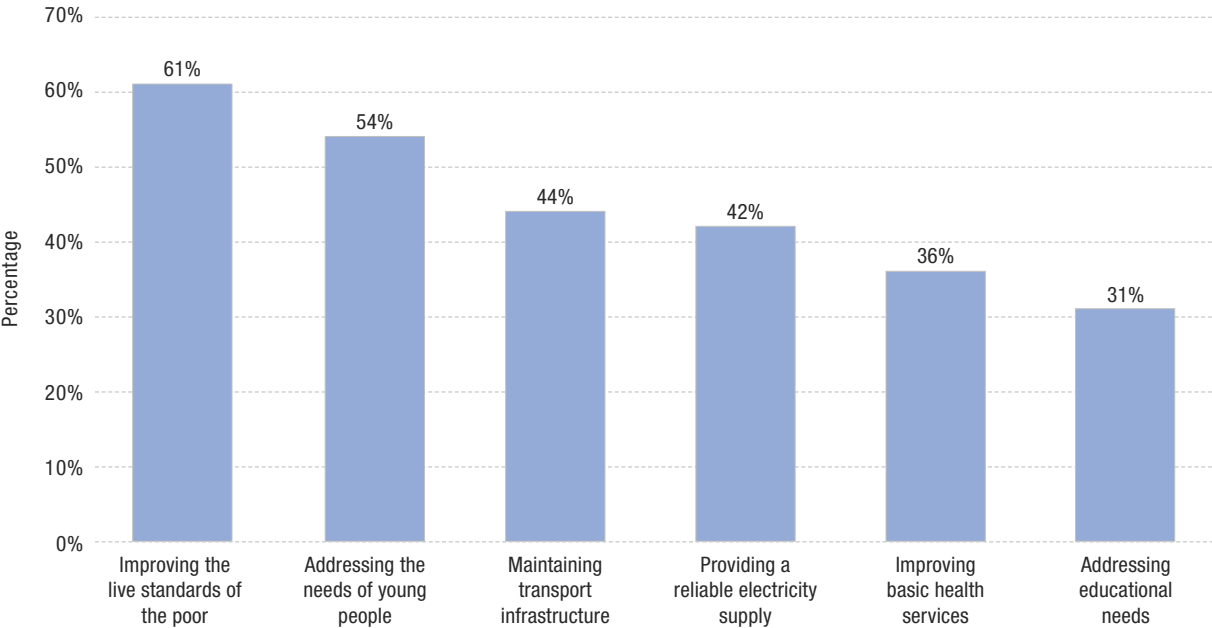
I say I want to be a journalist, but this is demotivating because there are no opportunities, as far as journalists are being followed, so I can desist, or I could change something. Dreams end up collapsing.

This creates frustration, which youth noted has made young people more vulnerable to

recruitment in the hope that they can bring about radical change or be set on a path of prosperity.

Human development is often primarily supplied by the state through public finances allocated to education, healthcare and so forth. However, youth across the country are dissatisfied with the government's performance in supplying the building blocks for human development. Figure 2 shows that young Mozambicans believe the state is doing 'very or fairly badly' at improving the lives of the poor (61%), addressing the needs of young people (54%), maintaining transport infrastructure such as roads and bridges (44%), supplying electricity (42%), improving healthcare (36%) and supplying education (31%). This paints a grim picture of the reality for young people whose human development prospects are being hindered by the state.

FIGURE 2: YOUTH THAT SAY THE GOVERNMENT IS PERFORMING BADLY AT ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS



Source: Afrobarometer, author's own calculations

Note: 'very badly' or 'fairly badly' responses from Mozambicans aged 18 to 25 years.

The focus group discussions reveal a perception among youth in Cabo Delgado that public resources (or national wealth) are not evenly distributed. One youth from Montepuez says the following on how the provision of public services impacts support for the insurgency:

There are many responsibilities concerning the professionals who run public services. From where the irresponsibility sits, to if they will follow the rules, how the services could be divided or how the government should make the distribution; all of this might create division. We can end up dividing Mozambique. Then, I can say that no, I can create my own movement and make my own justice because the government does not care about the public interest.

This aligns with reports that former president Armando Guebuza facilitated an uptick in elite self-enrichment and sidelined technocrats to make way for Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) military figures to take public office.⁴² This was largely intended to ensure that the gains of the illicit economy remained within the patrimonial networks of the ruling party, but at the expense of creating grievances among locals.

In Mozambique, the southern region, Maputo City in particular, is the most developed compared to the central and northern regions. This has led to the perception that the southern region benefits from resources in the north, without developing the area that these resources come from. Locals rely on land and natural resources to provide food, and communities rely on the teachings of Islamic

clerics for education. They rely on each other for water and sanitation. The government has systematically ignored and marginalised the province to the extent that it is called the ‘Forgotten Cape/Cabo Esquecido’. Of the country’s 10 provinces, Cabo Delgado ranks at the bottom in human development indicators.⁴³

Manipulation of religious and ethnic identities

During the focus groups, youths alluded to the manipulation of religion and ethnicity as factors that drive extremism. On religion, youths explained that it was not religion per se but rather fanaticism that led to people committing certain acts. Many participants stressed that the principles of Islamic religion do not justify violence, but that the lack of a ‘thorough’ understanding of Islam, coupled with manipulation by leaders of the ASWJ, has led to radicalisation. One participant explained that fanaticism can be found across different religions where texts and teachings have been misinterpreted.

As such, religion has been used as a justification for attacks despite erroneous interpretation. As one participant noted:

When that conflict started, I believe that the person who planned this terrorism mapped the area and saw the factors he could use, the weak side of the society itself, and he saw that using religion as a focus would make it much easier to attack the people.

The focus group discussions also surfaced the overlap between ethnic and religious dynamics in Cabo Delgado. For example, a youth explained that in one district in Palma,

resentment had developed between young people and Maxanganas (people coming from Gaza province in the south). The youth, lacking the educational qualifications for some of the formal employment opportunities in the area, resented the Maxanganas for what they saw as taking their jobs or marrying local women. Another youth explained that there had been ongoing conflict between the Makondes and the Makuas. The Makua are the largest ethnic group in Mozambique and speak variants of the Makua language. Along the coast, some Makua traders were converted to the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam under the influence of Swahili-Arab customers. The Makonde are an ethnic group from southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique. Though they have been under heavy Muslim influence for decades, few have converted to Islam. According to the youths, the conflicts between these two groups arose due to a lack of communication resulting from language barriers, with consequent influences on the insurgency.

Indeed, the International Crisis Group (ICG) traces ethno-religious tensions back to 2007, when youth, mainly dominated by ethnic Makua, started denouncing local religious councils, including the official Muslim council.⁴⁴ Large numbers of Makua have been recruited by the insurrection and these youths have been joined by ethnic Mwani militants. The Mwani are primarily fishermen and Muslims, while also believing in spirits and magic. They have predominantly been sympathetic to the opposition, Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). According to the ICG analysis, there was some element of religion (such as pushing for alcohol bans and the right of women to work), but anger had also stemmed from the Makua and the Mwani's exclusion from profits resulting from the discovery of rubies and

natural gas in Cabo Delgado. It was also believed that certain generals affiliated to the Makonde, President Nyusi's ethnic group, were unduly benefiting from business deals. However, the ICG points out that the rising tensions were political rather than tribal, resulting from the inequitable distribution of resources. The Makonde have been subject to severe attacks by militants, while the Mwani and Makua have also been affected.⁴⁵ This highlights the extent to which the patronage associated with the political economy has ethnic underpinnings.

Safety and security

Safety and security are other factors driving youths to extremism. Participants outlined the nature of forced recruitment, explaining that some youths believed the best way to avoid getting killed was to join the group. Such fear is widespread and confirmed by Afrobarometer data. In Mozambique, one in four citizens fears extremist violence, with 6% saying that they have experienced violence in the last two years. However, these figures are likely to be under-reported due to challenges in collecting data from rural Cabo Delgado, as noted earlier.⁴⁶

Fear, coupled with a failing sense of security among youths, was also linked to the role that the military forces played. One participant noted that:

Most of the young that join extremist groups do so because they are threatened and because of insufficient security, they end up joining as a way to safeguard their physical integrity and [that] of their families, since the national security forces, to some extent fail [to protect], showing a deficit in protecting citizens.

There remains a huge distrust between the population and the military, often because of abuses by the latter. Despite a heavy state presence in Cabo Delgado, state-led repression has violated the human rights of local communities⁴⁷ and the free media through acts of intimidation and arbitrary arrests.⁴⁸ Youths indicate that this has further fractured the already fragile vertical trust between the state and society, creating trust deficits that can work to push young people towards ASWJ. In the words of youth from Pemba:

Many times, there have been cases of extortion and threats by the military, which, in a way, makes some young people, in response, join the extremists.

At the same time, current evidence from the focus groups suggests that displaced youths are beginning to express interest in joining the military as a means of protection both for their families and for themselves so as to reduce the chances that they will be mistakenly seen as insurgents and killed. Without a comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme, however, it is possible that some of these recruits may even be former insurgents. Over 5 000 young people in Pemba have already joined the military, 70% of whom are displaced.⁴⁹ Another youth in Pemba noted that those displaced by the conflict often fear the national military more than the insurgents.

In a recent community meeting, soldiers blamed the abuses on many being unable to converse with Cabo Delgado residents who do not speak Portuguese, thereby arguing for greater youth enlistment to counter this issue.⁵⁰ Yet recent looting by security forces in Macomia has done nothing to instil trust.⁵¹ Joining the military therefore seems to be a last resort, but

the youth also remain at risk of recruitment from extremists. It is therefore critical that strategies are developed to strengthen youth resilience in Cabo Delgado.

Another participant stated that they believed the Mozambican government was doing its best to protect the population, but there were challenges in the way that the security forces were structured and in the way they engaged with local communities. Moreover, the perceived partiality of the military was raised, with one youth claiming the military only protects those that are rich, and another outlining an experience of illegal taxation by the police that had impacted on their views of the defence forces.

The lack of capacity of the military was also mentioned as a reason as to why there was distrust and ongoing fears over safety and security. As one respondent explained:

If the government itself hires private military, that means that the government itself does not believe in its own military, so who am I to believe in it?

The respondent went on to explain that from their perspective, the use of foreign military such as the SADC left little room for trust in the Mozambican military. As the youth explained, there should be enough soldiers within Mozambique to address the situation. However, there are expectations that the situation will improve with foreign intervention.

Such data is corroborated by Afrobarometer data from 2021, which shows decreasing levels of confidence since 2018 in the government's ability to resolve violent conflict, with 53% of respondents stating that the government was handling the conflict 'fairly poorly or badly', and

43% saying that it was handling it 'very or fairly well'. Figure 3 shows that attitudes on the ways to resolve the conflict also varied, with 21% of Mozambicans believing the best strategy would be to seek external support, 21% proposing negotiation with armed groups, 18% suggesting increased local military personnel, 10% suggesting working with local leaders, and 6% believing in the importance of the economy and job creation.⁵²

These varying sentiments were also reflected in the confidence in different stakeholders to resolve the conflict, with 50% of citizens saying they have 'a lot' of confidence in the government to do so, 44% having that same confidence in the SADC, 42% expressing confidence at the same levels in the African Union (AU) and 38% expressing confidence in South Africa.⁵³

Yet, some young people have joined the ASWJ of their own volition. Youths also spoke of previous exposure to violence as a precursor

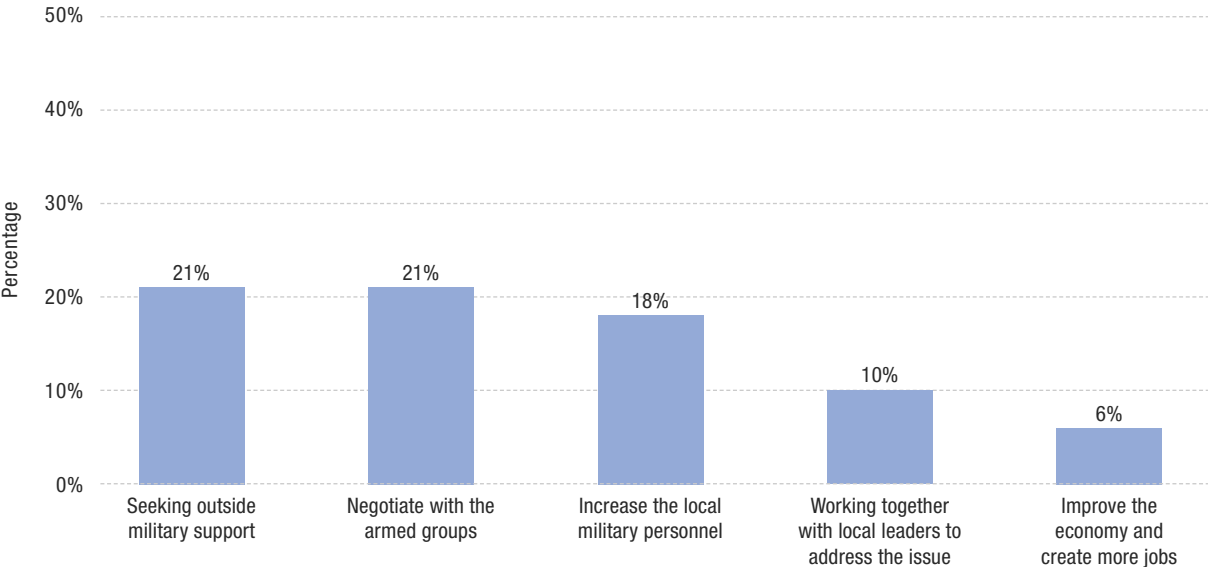
for extremism, noting that youths who have previously been beaten, for example, may adapt more easily to violence, while those that may be better educated would have more ability to consider their contribution to society.

Politics and governance

Grievances with the state is another often cited driver of extremism. Cabo Delgado is home to ethnic minorities who have long felt alienated from the state and, as discussed earlier, feel slighted by the unequal dispensation of public wealth, with most of it allocated to southern regions of Mozambique. One youth reflected on this:

People ... say look at South, there everything is beautiful, people have opportunity and here we do not have opportunity, so we have to make justice with our own hands.

FIGURE 3: MOZAMBIicans SUPPORT A SECURITISED APPROACH TO COUNTERING EXTREMISM



Source: Afrobarometer, 2021

This highlights the worrying impact that an entrenched and unfair political economy has on marginalised communities.

A small but well-connected elite in Cabo Delgado have positioned themselves to capture what national wealth does make its way up north, including gains from the emerging liquid natural gas sector and illicit trade. The unfair nature of the Mozambican political economy has created yet another loophole for extremists to exploit. A young man from Montepuez reflects on this:

Regarding wealth in Cabo Delgado, yes, I have heard, sorry the expression, people from North saying we are working for people of South, we have the wealth and they are getting fat. That means that distribution is not equitable. So it can be one of the main reasons, some people can say it does not make sense; this can be one of the strategies that terrorists use.

Youth note that corruption is at the heart of their grievances with the state, with one participant calling it a ‘beast with seven heads’. This perception is also held by youth across the country. The 2021 Afrobarometer survey finds that large portions of Mozambicans aged between 18 and 30 years say that ‘most’ or ‘all’ of the Presidency is corrupt (33%), as are local government councillors (34%) and the police (51%).⁵⁴ The World Bank’s World Governance Indicators reaffirm this with their 2020 score for ‘control on corruption’, ranking Mozambique in the bottom quartile of countries (compared to a decade ago when it placed towards the mid-quartile, indicating a decade of decline on managing corruption).⁵⁵

Some of the ‘beast’s heads’ described in the focus groups include the irregular appointment of public administration officials who get their positions through patronage rather than merit, the military seeking resource rents from the insurgents and the general acceptance of bribes. The nature of the political economy cannot be divorced from the unequal dispensation of national wealth, services and opportunities, which creates scarcity and resentment among youth in the area. One youth reflected that poor governance also weakens national unity.

Another theme that emerged was democratic despondency. Some participants noted the trend of declining voter participation, as ‘some people say, “I will not vote” if they already know who will govern the country’. This suggests that the ‘paradox of voting’ might be taking hold among youth in Cabo Delgado, in other words, for the self-interested, reasonable voter, the cost of voting exceeds the expected benefits of doing so.⁵⁶ Indeed, one in four (25%) Mozambicans aged between 18 and 30 years said they did not vote in the most recent election, with more than half (58%) indicating dissatisfaction with the country’s democracy.⁵⁷

Importantly, youth indicate that all of these frustrations and grievances towards the state are left unaddressed, with little knowledge among them of how mechanisms to report grievances operate. However, even if youth knew how to engage the state, there are doubts about how responsive the state is to addressing community grievances. The 2021 Afrobarometer survey finds that nearly half (46%) of Mozambique’s youth say that local government councillors ‘never’ listen, compared to a much smaller 28% who say that traditional leaders ‘never’ listen.⁵⁸

The Afrobarometer survey further finds that nearly half of Mozambicans aged between 18 and 25 feel unheard by Members of the Provincial Assembly (47%), Members of Parliament (46%) and their local government councillors (43%). In addition, over half (54%) of the Mozambicans in this age group believe the state is performing badly at addressing the needs of young people.⁵⁹

A youth in Montepuez summarised this issue as follows:

We are not heard, no one listens to us. For example, we can arrange an audience to have with the supreme, in this case the higher organs, they do not give us that feedback that we can interact with, so it is kind of complicated, it is really hard.

This unresponsiveness from the state is linked to election cycles, with youth noting that politicians and local councillors only engage young people before elections to ensure their support.

In considering the various ways society can engage a democratic government, Afrobarometer finds that Mozambicans aged between 18 and 30 years are least likely to attend a community meeting or protest – 43% say that they have never attended a community meeting while 82% say that they have never attended a protest or march.⁶⁰ This is reflective of a dampened democratic culture among youth across the country.

Furthermore, state repression in Mozambique is high. The 2021 Freedom in the World Index scores Mozambique 45/100 and rates it as partly free, with scores of 14/40 for political

rights and 29/60 for civil liberties.⁶¹ of Afrobarometer finds that 30% of youth say that they are ‘not at all’ or ‘not very free’ to join any political party that they want to, although this is a sentiment expressed by Mozambicans of all ages.⁶²

It is clear from the discussions that young people have a complex relationship with the state, one that has caused frustration and feelings of helplessness brought on by poor governance, corruption, abuse of power and unresponsiveness to the needs of young people. All of this works to push youth towards extremists whose narratives are curated to account for the widespread frustrations experienced by youth in the area.

Social cohesion and identity

Social cohesion is necessary not only for peace but also for progress. In Mozambique, and particularly in Cabo Delgado, youth noted that social capital is depleted by low levels of patriotism, a loss of hope and a lack of trust, both with the government and with one another. They also spoke to the need for bridging and bonding across ethnic groups and religions.

As figure 4 shows, roughly one in four young people feel they have been treated unfairly based on religion or ethnicity. However, tolerance levels among the same young Mozambicans are higher, with only 16% saying that they would dislike their neighbour to come from a different religion and 14% saying they would dislike a neighbour from a different ethnicity.

One youth in Pemba noted that although ethnic and religious tensions do not often become violent, the tense atmosphere between groups

impacts coexistence. This might create a gap through which extremist narratives can assert themselves to further broaden social fractures within society. Other concerns noted were competition over scarce resources, which plays out along ethnic lines, and language barriers which contribute to misunderstandings between groups. One youth noted that harmonious coexistence free of any kind of discrimination will create a natural resistance for young people when it comes to recruitment into ASWJ.

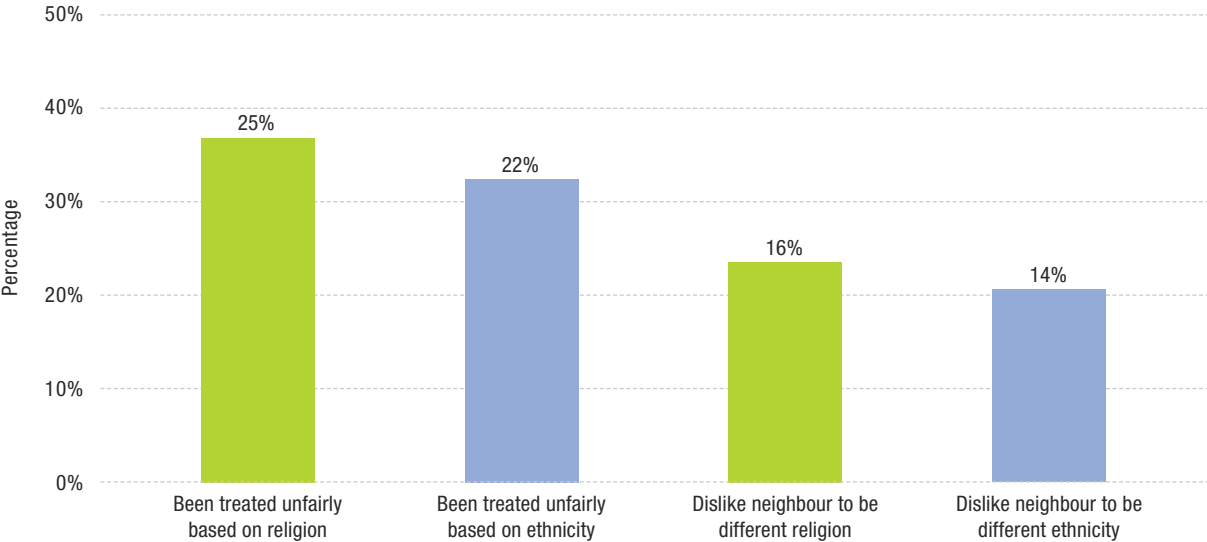
In the focus groups, one youth stated that:

When one culture rejects the other, it feels humiliated and can easily seek refuge in terrorist groups. Therefore, the issue of lack of integration can contribute to terrorism. Social, cultural and religious integration is important because it allows individuals from different regions, cultures, religions and political preferences to live in the

same society. The level of integration of different cultures or ethnicities living together and in peace must be at the highest level because the lack of this integration can contribute to violent extremism, as we have already known to have happened in past years.

Respondents also spoke of individuals exhibiting antisocial behaviour, which extremists’ prey upon. These were often individuals who spent a lot of time alone or on social media. One youth noted that insurgents used social media networks to connect with and gain the trust of such individuals. In doing so, they make them feel accepted under all circumstances. This recruitment method has been commonly used by IS and, despite their loss of territory, remains a key means for IS to maintain and grow their global network of young recruits. Many participants noted that ASWJ used social media to project their messages and activities.

FIGURE 4: RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION



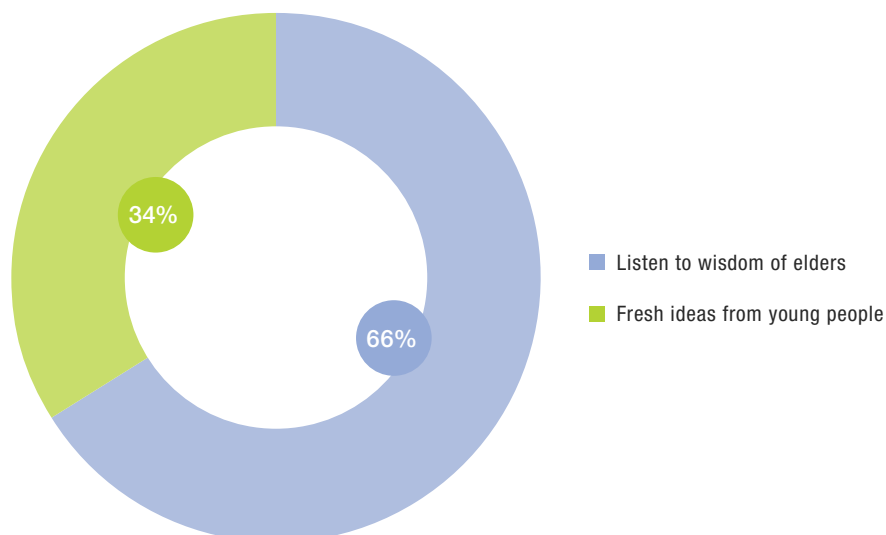
Source: Afrobarometer, 2021, author’s own calculations

BUILDING RESILIENCE AMONG THE YOUTH

During the focus group discussions, the youth were asked about issues of resilience. Many described how past experiences could have shaped individual behaviour and talked of how feelings of frustration and revenge could arise from religious, ethnic, political and individual factors. In looking at

the way forward, youths made recommendations, such as the need to strengthen school, religious and family education. Afrobarometer data shows that two in three young people (66%) welcome wisdom from elders, while one in three (34%) prefers that their perspectives be

FIGURE 5: YOUTH IDEAS VS WISDOM OF ELDERS



Source: Afrobarometer, author's own calculations

Note: Responses from Mozambicans aged 18–25 years.

taken into account (Figure 5), showing the importance of engaging youth in local governance. There is therefore room for building on traditional and localised structures of governance, while at the same time strengthening avenues for youth engagement.

Youth were also asked about existing avenues for engagement with the government. The youth explained that few channels existed, other than around election time or when party/political support was needed. Yet even then, they report that promises made during electioneering are left unfulfilled. It is essential that youth are able to access grievance mechanisms so that they are not forced to 'take things into their own hands'. Where state mechanisms for grievances are unresponsive, non-state actors should consider setting up an independent grievance mechanism which can lobby alongside youth in the area. Youth also expressed a keen desire for lectures, meetings and dialogues to be able to have their voices heard.

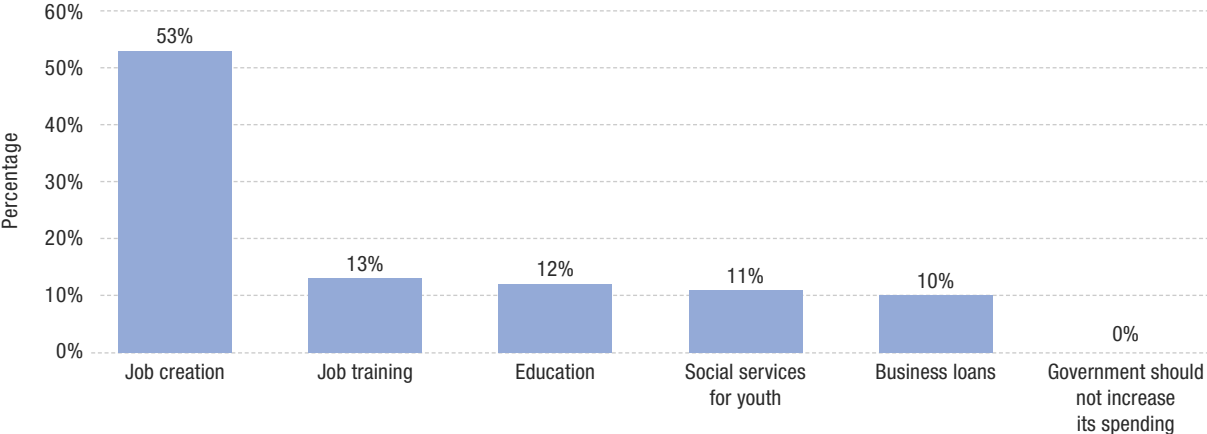
The participants were also asked how best their human capacities could be strengthened. Responses varied, from vocational and

technical training to culture and music. One suggestion was to set up support centres that could guide youth who are at different points in their lives. Moreover, they expressed a desire to be involved in resource exploration projects. According to focus group facilitators, youth did not have big aspirations, but felt that entry-level positions had been systematically denied to them, especially for those who went to school. In Montepuez, youths reflected on the income-earning opportunities created by artisanal mining, which has since been shut down. They now feel worse off than they did before the insurgency took hold.

Generating an income is essential in a poverty-ridden region like Cabo Delgado. As Figure 6 shows, 2021 Afrobarometer data demonstrates that for young Mozambicans, job creation is by far the highest priority for youth investment (53%), followed by job training (13%), education (12%), social services (11%) and business loans (10%).⁶³

The next section examines international, regional and subregional frameworks for youth engagement, with implications for Mozambique.

FIGURE 6: PRIORITIES FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT



Source: Afrobarometer, author's own calculations

Note: 'very badly' or 'fairly badly' responses from Mozambicans aged 18 to 25 years.



YOUTH FRAMEWORKS FOR ENGAGEMENT

The role of the youth in contributing to peace and security is increasingly recognised at international, regional and subregional levels. Since the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved Resolution 2250 in 2012, another two resolutions have been passed. The first and second resolutions, 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), called for the role of youths to be recognised in preventing and resolving conflicts, with the second emphasising the role of youths in negotiations and peace agreements. The third, Resolution 2535 (2020), is the first time that a regular reporting mechanism in the youth security council was established and calls on Member States to protect and encourage young people in their efforts.⁶⁴ In particular, it stresses the importance of providing opportunities to young people to strengthen resilience, and to adopt strategies for employment, psychosocial support and others, as well as strategies to prevent extremists from exploiting social media to spread disinformation.

The AU has developed a Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)⁶⁵ as well as a 10-year implementation plan for the framework (2020–2029). This framework outlines issues such as youth participation at national, regional and continental levels; the role of the youth in conflict prevention and mediation efforts; enhanced protection of youths in peace, conflict and post-conflict situations; and enhanced coordination with stakeholders on planning and the development of security sector reform, reconstruction and stabilisation youth policies.⁶⁶ There is also an African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2019–2023).⁶⁷ The AU Office of the Youth Envoy (AU-OYE) has also signalled a commitment to youth perspectives, although the post has been vacant since February 2021, meaning that many of these activities have fallen by the wayside.⁶⁸

At a subregional level, the SADC has adopted a Youth Employment Promotion

Policy⁶⁹ but makes no mention of the active involvement of youth in peace and security. The first SADC youth forum was hosted in 2019 by the Southern African Youth Forum, and the second and third, in 2020 and 2021, were hosted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, youths have repeatedly called for the integration of UN youth resolutions into national and regional plans for youth, peace and security. At the 2021 forum, youths lamented the prevailing attitude that they are often viewed as part of the problem and too inexperienced

when it comes to discussing problems in the region. The issue of restrictions to social media and the internet was also raised, and good examples of positive activism in the context of Cabo Delgado were shared.⁷⁰

Much more can be done, therefore, to integrate youths into peace and security discussions at the SADC level. Moreover, Mozambique would do well to domesticate UN and AU frameworks at a national level and to integrate lessons learned from other contexts.



PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

What prospects currently exist for youth development? In 2020, an agency known as the Northern Integrated Development Agency (ADIN) was established with the aim of boosting economic development in Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula. It works under four main pillars: humanitarian assistance, economic development, community resilience and communication.⁷¹ Armando Panguene was sworn in as chair but unexpectedly dismissed following tension with agriculture minister Celsio Correia over the control of development funds. He was replaced by Armindo Ngunga, the former secretary of state for Cabo Delgado. The agency has been criticised for being slow-moving.⁷²

In April 2021, the World Bank announced that it would provide US\$100 million to ADIN to promote social and economic projects for youth inclusion. The funds are intended to enhance social cohesion, and to provide vital income support through cash-for-work programmes aimed at women and youth across various sectors,

including fishing and agricultural activities, entrepreneurship and business management training.⁷³ A new donation of the same amount was also announced in October, with the World Bank dedicating funds for psychosocial support, the reconstruction of public buildings and the restoration of basic services.

In September 2021, Ngunga held a press conference in which he announced that he would focus on building 800 houses in the village of Marokani, in Ancuabe district, in Cabo Delgado province. He noted that ADIN intends to reach out to youths to create youth cooperatives and associations in relation to job creation.⁷⁴ ADIN also announced in November that it would provide agricultural kits to 350 000 Mozambicans affected by the insurgency.⁷⁵ The agency will soon be presenting its strategic plan to the government.⁷⁶

The Mozambican government also approved a Reconstruction Plan for Cabo Delgado on 26 August 2021 for

an amount of US\$300 million, as a peacebuilding and development strategy for areas affected by terrorism.⁷⁷ One set of measures to be implemented by the Secretariat of State for Youth includes holding dialogues that encourage the participation and integration of young people 'in patriotic actions for the promotion of peace, national unity and the defence of sovereignty'.⁷⁸

There are also outside efforts to support youth development. For example, USAID is developing two youth entrepreneurship and

employment programmes, while a third focuses on leadership and vocational skills.⁷⁹ However, in the future, it will be critical that such efforts are coordinated in a coherent manner and that a greater focus is placed on social cohesion, youth participation in peace and security issues, and on religious and ethnic tolerance. Moreover, it is important that programmes move beyond the focus on entrepreneurship and skills development and consider how to strengthen youth networks and associations, and to enhance better engagement between youth, local leaders and high-ranking government officials.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has found that youth are driven to extremism in Mozambique due to a variety of factors. Overwhelmingly, the lack of basic human needs such as food, social services, education and safety and security came through as drivers of extremism. These provide entry points for recruitment by the ASWJ, not so much in terms of religion (although the manipulation of religion and identity was a factor), but in terms of material incentives. The lack of political space for youth engagement also leaves the youth marginalised and disillusioned with government. There is evidence of social fracturing, indicating that social cohesion might be eroding. Youth also shed light on certain biases towards particular communities, often stemming from perceptions of inequitable or unjust distribution of resources. They also feel ostracised from gas development projects. With few opportunities for the future, youth will continue to remain vulnerable and at high risk of radicalisation by extremists.

Generally, the population seems to be divided on support for outside military intervention, such as the missions now provided by SADC and Rwandan forces. Although safety and security are key issues for the youth, they tend to distrust the Mozambican military, whose human rights abuses and poor record of engagement with communities have done little to build trust. However, if these missions can take a zero-tolerance attitude to human rights abuses, engage communities in a mutually beneficial way and coordinate among each other, they may begin to restore trust in the population. Some youths are interested in joining the military as a means of protection and employment, but it will be important to reach out to these youths and to develop more systematic means of engagement. It will also be important to engage youths outside of Cabo Delgado, since recent advances by Rwandan and SADC troops have meant that extremists have fled to other

provinces, such as Niassa and Nampula. The same drivers of extremism are also present in these areas and therefore youth in these provinces are at risk.

When it comes to offsetting developmental deficits, ADIN may offer prospects for inclusive youth development with its focus on infrastructure, agriculture and youth employment. However, corruption might threaten these gains and thus it will be critical to set up independent oversight to ensure both accountability and the appropriate use of funds. Where there has been misappropriation, impunity can no longer be the norm.

As noted in Afrobarometer data, job creation is the biggest priority for youth investment. Skills transfer, education, social services and business loans are also critical. Proper consideration needs to be given to developing employment-intensive industries in the north which can contribute to both the income prospects of young people and overall government revenue. The government could also consider strategies to ringfence government income from gas for the youth, and to ensure jobs are given to local Mozambicans in an inclusive manner. The surplus revenue from developing employment-intensive industry as well as funds ringfenced from new mining ventures can eventually fund a social grants programme for the affected populations that can help cushion the effects of the insurgency and build local resilience.

Furthermore, youths should be engaged at the design stage of youth programmes, as well as in their implementation. It will also be important that youths are supported to develop structures and organisations that can provide

coordinated inputs. A focus will also need to be placed on psychosocial support, healing and social cohesion.

More broadly, the Mozambican government can do more to engage the youth in critical dialogue and in governance. The UN and AU have developed frameworks for youth engagement in peace and security, which can serve as guides for the government of Mozambique. The SADC should also consider developing a regional framework for youth engagement in peace and security. It can also play a role in raising funds for youth programmes and should consider cross-border initiatives, given the potential for regional spillover. The AU can also look to ways in which it can strengthen support for youth engagements in peace and security.

As such, the following recommendations are made:

To the Mozambican government

- Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to human rights abuses in the military, enforceable through an independent oversight body, and develop mechanisms to strengthen engagement between the military and communities.
- Prioritise the adoption of ADIN's strategy for Cabo Delgado, ensuring inclusive consultations with youth and other marginalised groups.
- Provide support to youth-focused institutions and youth hubs and ensure a two-way engagement that takes youth perspectives into account.
- Strengthen dialogues between youth and the government and implement

- decisions to reduce grievances and improve government responsiveness.
- Allocate national resources on a needs basis and make meaningful efforts to ensure that youth in Cabo Delgado are the recipients of quality public services.
 - Develop a national framework for youth engagement in terms of peace and security.
 - In addressing corruption, more assertive and independent oversight is necessary. This includes the unbundling of elitism that drives grievances and facilitates youth radicalisation.
 - Prioritise human development outcomes that help build resilience.
 - Consider macroeconomic policy interventions that can develop employment-intensive industry in Cabo Delgado that can be connected to global supply chains.
 - Insist on coordinated external engagements, in line with national and local priorities, and ensure the accountability of foreign troops.

To the SADC

- Strengthen the civilian component of the SADC mission and place a focus on human rights training for both the SADC mission and the Mozambican military.
- Develop a regional framework for youth, peace and security and develop programmes that use youths as agents for peace.
- Consider ways to support youth employment in Mozambique through the SADC's Youth Employment Promotion Policy.
- Generate financial support and technical expertise from the region to support the youth in collaboration with the AU.
- Support the government of Mozambique to consider DDR programmes, including those specifically for youth, and transitional justice mechanisms for community reintegration.

To the international community

- Support training for the Mozambican military on human rights and community engagement.
- Coordinate support for Cabo Delgado and complement harder security approaches with efforts to promote youth dialogue and social cohesion.
- Facilitate a regular dialogue among youth, state authorities, civil society organisations and the private sector on resilience to violent extremism among youth.
- Share successful lessons relating to youth empowerment from the African continent and around the globe and raise awareness on the positive power of youth for peace.
- Support the development of regional and national frameworks for youth, peace and security and invest in their implementation.
- Consider skills-transfer programmes for youth in Cabo Delgado.
- Provide mental health and psychosocial support for youths affected by the conflict.
- Explore the potential for transitional justice mechanisms to support DDR and prevent future recruitment.



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CDD is a civil society organisation with a strategic focus on catalysing democratic development, human rights and inclusive governance based on the youth agency. The CDD Strategic Plan 2020–2024 has four interdependent pillars: democracy and human rights; youth leadership; economic justice; and peace and security. CDD contributes to building a resilient, inclusive, democratic and human rights-respecting society. It also works to protect civic space, and human rights defenders. Find out more at cddmoz.org.



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