

Reflections on Mozambican Civil Society

In this series of papers, Kepa publishes reflections on the state of civil society in the countries in which it operates (Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam). These reflections, based on Kepa's own work with its partners, member organisations and their partners in the country, provide an overview and highlight some current issues and developments in the role of civil society.

Civil society consists of many different actors from small informal activist groups to big institutionalized organizations. In these reflections, civil society organisation (CSO) is used as an overall concept to cover all these actors. The term NGO is used only if it specifically refers to registered, institutionalized non-governmental organizations, while CBO stands for community-based organisation. INGO refers to international non-governmental organisations.

Kepa in Mozambique

In Mozambique, Kepa supports local civil society actors to influence development policy processes through partnerships and through capacity building. Partnerships are linked to Kepa's key policy themes: development cooperation, global economic policies and climate justice.

In Maputo Kepa has partnership agreements with two CSOs: Grupo Moçambicano da Dívida (GMD, Mozambican Debt Group) and Justiça Ambiental (JA! Environmental Justice). Kepa also maintains its long partnership with the Provincial Farmers' Union of (UPC) in Cabo Delgado, which is one of the local CSOs promoting community rights.

Historical and cultural background

An independent civil society in Mozambique arose after the enactment of the 1990 constitution in which a multiparty system was established. Before that Mozambique had a one party system, which did not allow those outside the ruling FRELIMO party to take part in any civil society activities. Thanks to the new freedom, many CSOs emerged in the 1990s. Those organisations were very active and enthusiastic. Politically, the main opposition party, RENAMO, challenged FRELIMO and the fledgling democracy seemed very promising.

However, from 2004 onwards, FRELIMO has reinforced its political supremacy by systematically expanding its representation within the state apparatus and at all geographic levels. At the same time, FRELIMO rule has generated greater intolerance towards the political opposition. Consequently, RENAMO has been weakened and has faced internal problems not least due to enfeebling leadership. Due to this polarization of power, the space for civil society action has been reduced.

Since late 2012, the political tension between the two largest parties – FRELIMO and RENAMO – has escalated to the point of armed incidents registered repeatedly since April 2013, which have caused several civilian casualties. In essence, the current conflict stems from disagreements over a number of issues, including the country's electoral law, the participation of RENAMO in the

military forces and the redistribution of wealth. Despite a series of negotiations between the two parties, in mid-2013 the situation continued to be tense.

Advocacy work in Mozambique is challenging, as the culture dominated by a stout social hierarchy that makes it difficult for local people to demand for accountability from government officials or other educated people. People who question government action are often labelled as opposition sympathisers, and are sometimes persecuted. Dreadful memories of the civil war are still rather fresh and questioning the government is sometimes perceived as a first step towards a new social turmoil. Finally, there are reasons to believe that the government has coaxed some of the most prominent civil society leaders. These kinds of measures have somewhat reduced civil society advocacy capacity.

In general, civil society is weaker in the provinces than in the capital, Maputo. This weakness is due to several reasons. First, most organisations lack basic administrative capacities to run projects and very few have strong thematic knowledge of governance and related issues. Second, many people lack a strong dedication for social justice. Third, many initiatives and organisations work in a top-down manner that results in the concentration of power at the top, and limits the possibilities for strengthening grassroots democratic participation. Finally, networking and coordination among different participants in public life is limited.

Several national level organisations based in Maputo implement advocacy activities and some of them reach to decision-makers. There is a clear contrast between big, strong, “elite” organisations such as Forum Mulher, GMD and AMA, which have robust institutional capacity and several sources of financial support, and smaller organisations such as Assotsi and GMD-NPCD in the provinces. In general, there is very little coordination and cooperation between the stronger and the weaker CSOs, on one hand, and between the CSOs based in the capital and the provinces, on the other hand.

Having said that, there have also been some good examples of cooperation, e.g. Justiça Ambiental has worked closely together with UNAC (National Farmers’ Union) to address situations of land grabbing and corporate abuse in rural areas. Together, the two organizations demand respect for the rights of the local communities faced by increasing private mega investments.

Another good example is the collaboration between CIP (Centre for Public Integrity) and IESE (Socio-economic research institute) in monitoring the implementation of the EITI (Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative) in Mozambique. The two organizations represent civil society in the secretariat of EITI, and together they demand greater transparency “beyond the basics of EITI”, meaning openness about the contracts of megaprojects and the renegotiation of contractual conditions.

Today, there is a large number of international NGOs operating in Mozambique, running activities, funding local organizations and building the technical capacity of local CSOs. While contributing considerably to the social development of the country, INGOs have also faced several difficulties. One common challenge related to capacity building efforts has been insufficient evaluation of the outcomes and occasionally a too ‘Western’ worldview that dominates the training approaches. Sometimes, INGOs have also faced shortcomings in the implementation due to insufficient understanding of local needs, values and practices.

Main actors in Mozambican Civil Society Major CSOs by sector:

	Maputo/National level
Public policy, development , poverty, anti-corruption	GMD (Mozambican Debt Group), CIP (Public Integrity Center), Forum Mulher, CESC
Environment	Justiça Ambiental (JA), Centro Terra Viva
Women's rights	Forum Mulher, WLSA, Liga dos Direitos Humanos, Muleide,
Health, HIV/AIDS	MONASO, FDC, MULEIDE, Nwety,
Peasants rights, natural resources and megaprojects	CIP (Public Integrity Center), Justiça Ambiental (JA), Platform of Natural Resources, UNAC (National Union Of Farmers), ORAM (Rural Organization for Mutual Help), LDH (Human Rights League).
Academic institutions that support civil society views and positions.	IESE, Cruzeiro do Sul

Government–civil society relations

In theory, at least, Mozambique has created sound and democratic instruments for civil society participation in public life. The donor countries have endorsed many of them. Mozambique has a five-year plan for development, a poverty reduction programme, yearly economic and social plans from the national to the district level, a development observatory (a forum where the government presents its plans and the results of the implementation to the civil society), and consultative councils (a kind of advisory board for the local government). Despite their potential, all these structures suffer shortcomings.

One of the major difficulties they face is the limited capacity of government officials, especially outside Maputo. More importantly, there is a lack of genuine political commitment to use these instruments to benefit the majority of the population. The government often does only the minimum necessary to engage with the civil society. Though the phrase “civil society participation” is ubiquitous in government reports, but in reality it is hindered by the government’s inability and lack of interest in providing true possibilities for its realisation. The government’s attitude and civil society’s own shortcomings form a vicious circle that is difficult to overcome.

In 2010 there were two major crises that shook the composure of the government. Firstly, a rift occurred between the donor group and the government over basic democratic principles that were not followed in the country. One of the issues raised against the government was the lack of transparency in the 2009 general elections and the alleged vote rigging by FRELIMO. Another issue was about the dominance of FRELIMO in all public institutions. Further, the donor community called for more efficient anti-corruption measures, the public declaration of assets by state leaders, improved legislation to regulate conflicts of interests, improved procurement procedures, and enabling the new Mozambican Democratic Movement party (MDM) to take seats in the assembly. The rift was overcome in April 2010, when FRELIMO agreed to address these issues.

The other major incident in 2010 was the violent popular rioting that took place in September. In general, riots have been rare in Mozambique, but the current administration has already faced popular revolts twice within a period of six years. Such upheavals are an indication of serious problems in the dialogue between the government and civil society.

The FRELIMO government has created a hostile socio-political environment in which CSOs feel compelled to refrain from voicing their dissent. The party has the economic and political clout to “cut your legs”, as the popular expression puts it. People in Mozambique say “this country has an owner” referring to the political elite who fought in the liberation struggle against the Portuguese colonial rule, and who later on became much like the old colonial rulers.

It appears that the government is nowadays most open to cooperating with CSOs providing services that have an immediate material

In 2011 and 2012, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, ranked Mozambique at 21st position out of 52 African countries. Compared to 2010, Mozambique dropped by one place (20st). According to the index, Mauritius is the best governed country, with 82 points, followed by Cape Verde with 79 points. Botswana was ranked third, with 76 points.

impact, such as basic health care services, construction of schools and repair of infrastructures. Such organizations can be seen as direct contributors to the government's five years plan. On the contrary, advocacy oriented CSOs who raise a critical voice condemning the abuse of power and the rampant corruption in the government institutions, are often labelled as sympathisers of the political opposition and the 'enemies of development'.

In many Mozambican public institutions, there is a widespread view that the government is doing a favour by allowing civil society to operate; few understand it as a legitimate right of CSOs in a democratic society.

As mentioned above, during the past ten years, the government has strengthened its control over CSOs. For international NGOS this has come to mean e.g. more complex processes to obtain the work permit. The situation is particularly frustrated as there are no clear guidelines to orient the NGOs in the process. While the government has legitimate reasons to keep track of INGO activities in the country, the increasingly cumbersome administrative procedures create an environment of intimidation, which in turn increases the mistrust between the civil society and the government.

Current issues and latest developments

Recently, the public debate has had a strong focus on the large-scale foreign investment projects – so called mega-projects – especially on their taxation practices, corporate responsibility, rights of the communities affected by these investments etc. Another issue that has deserved attention of the civil society in particular, is the transparency of the public financial management and the tracking of public spending at all levels.

IESE (Institute for Economic and Social Studies), CIP (Public Integrity Center), and MASC (Civil Society Aid Mechanism) can be considered as some of the most influential opinion leaders in the Mozambican civil society at the moment. Each of these organizations has contributed to the current debate.

According to IESE's megaproject assessment, Mozambique could cover its annual expenses without external aid if the large corporations paid fair taxes for their megaprojects. According to a IESE study, megaprojects are not in Mozambique because of the tax exemptions, as some people say, but because of the demand for minerals at the global market.

In other words, even if the government renegotiated the contracts and raised higher taxes, the companies would not leave the country, as minerals and other natural resources are nowadays a very lucrative business. Government resistance to the public demands for renegotiating the contracts has evoked suspicions that the current agreements with the transnational companies involve important personal gains for high-ranking officials.

CIP is leading a working group that reports, advocates, and disseminates information on the implementation of EITI in Mozambique. CIP's analyses have been influential in creating public debate on the state budget and the role the budget has in policy discussions in the country. CIP also published an analysis of the 2012 budget execution in all major newspapers. Even parliamentarians have been using CIP's budget analyses to challenge the government. Recently, CIP obtained some of the classified contracts of mega-projects, and after a thorough analysis, will reveal the contractual arrangements to the public.

MASC has been very active partnering with Mozambican and international organisations in order to launch and disseminate studies and research reports to all parts of the country, thus promoting a series of discussions among civil society organizations about the challenges Mozambique is facing.

Most recently, some civil society organizations have raised concerns for the forthcoming large-scale agriculture program, ProSavana, that is expected to occupy 14 million hectares in the northern provinces of Nampula, Zambézia, Cabo Delgado and Niassa. ProSavana is funded by and implemented in direct collaboration with Japan and Brazil. Since the beginning of 2013, UNAC and JA! are campaigning against ProSavana as they say the Program will unavoidably lead to land grabbing that will transform small farmers into tools for the foreign companies to make greater profit.

Indeed, the Program was planned without any consultation with the affected communities. UNAC and JA! doubt that the ProSavana will improve livelihoods of the small-scale farmers, as the government says. So far, the civil society has put together a petition asking for complete halt of the Program until it has obtained full agreement with the civil society and the local communities. The petition was signed by 23 Mozambican organizations and 43 international organizations/social movements and was sent to the presidents of Brazil, Japan and Mozambique.

Funding for civil society actors

The main sources of funding for civil society actors include the local funds from various embassies and larger INGOs. A small number of CSOs get some funding from national initiatives. The financial crisis has had some impact on donor support to CSOs. In some cases, the amount of financial support has diminished considerably, even to the extent that some organizations have closed their national or regional offices.

Many INGOs support civil society actors by granting direct funding for specific activities. This type of support is very important and has generated positive outcomes for many CSOs. However, it is often challenging for the organisations to guarantee support for their operating costs. Another challenge is to ensure funding for a longer term. In particular, smaller organisations often receive funds for one year at a time, what makes it difficult for them to pursue longer-term objectives. At the same time, many donors ask for fast results and impacts in order to justify these partnerships to their own taxpayers. These approaches do not provide a sustainable basis for local processes of social change.

There have also been cases of mismanagement of funds among CSOs. If compared with the cases of fraud in the government institutions, the consequences for CSOs have been in some cases more fatal than those for the government. CSOs have quickly gained a poor name and lost all, or most of their financial sources whereas the government often only loses one of its many donors.

One challenge in CSO funding is that there are periods when donors collectively prioritize certain funding areas, such as gender equality, HIV prevention and treatment, good governance, etc. The collective prioritization by the donors risk creating unbalances in the overall social development arena where some areas receive more funds than they can actually use up, while other thematic areas, such as rural development, may remain underfunded.

Finnish organizations supporting CSOs in Mozambique

Name of Finnish NGO	Name of Mozambican partner	Number of projects in Mozambique	Sectors of work
FAI DD	ACRIDEME	1	Vocational education for mentally disabled children, children's rights (it will end in 2013)
Finn Church Aid	Ecumenical Community for Social and Economic Development -Projeto Xiquelene	4	HIV/AIDS, rural development, human rights and sanitation
SASK	Labour unions		1
Plan Finland Capacity building for labour unions	Plan Mozambique	1	Catastrophe mitigation and risk disaster
Taksvärkki	ASSCODECHA	1	Youth empowerment
Kulttuuriyhdistys Agora	Eduardo Mondlane University	1	Art education
UFF	ADPP	5	Teacher training
SYL	AFORTALECER	1	Education (Library in the class rooms)

