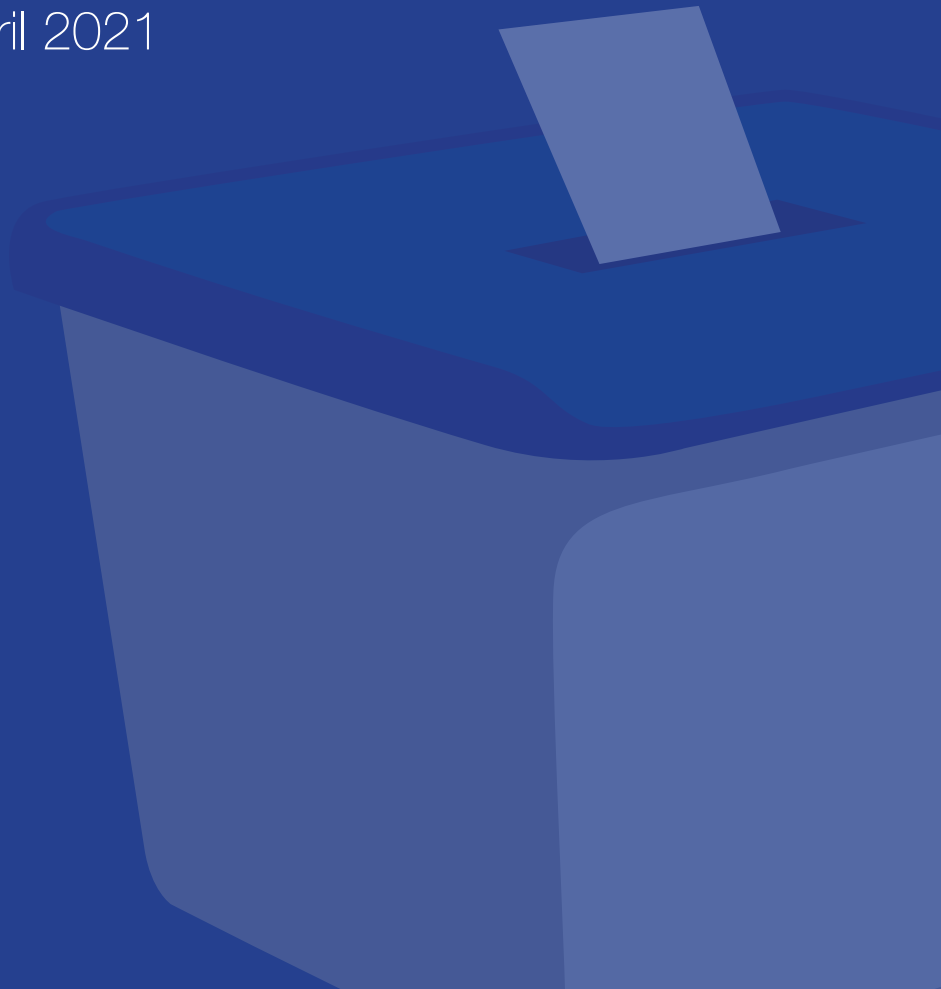




Executive Summary

Mozambique United Nations Electoral Needs Assessment Mission (NAM)

22 March – 6 April 2021



Executive Summary

1. The needs assessment took place virtually from 22 March to 6 April 2021, following a request by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, dated 22 July 2020 for continued UN electoral assistance for the 2022-2025 electoral cycle. Mozambique is due to hold districts and municipal elections in 2023 and presidential, legislative and provincial elections in 2024. The request included the extension of the existing UNDP electoral support project, “Strengthening the Electoral Authorities of Mozambique” (SEAM), until 31 December 2021 on the one hand, and the provision of additional support in the following areas for the next electoral cycle, on the other hand: i) capacity development for the newly appointed members of the national electoral commission, ii) civic education, and iii) improvement of the voter registration and of the database management.
2. Consultations were held with representatives of the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), Government, the National Assembly, the judiciary, police, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), media, international assistance partners, donors, the UN Country Team and the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Mozambique.

Key Findings

3. The security, political, human rights and socio-economic environment in Mozambique remains volatile and very challenging, as noted with concern by many stakeholders met by the NAM. This could have a direct impact on the holding of the upcoming local and general elections, in 2023 and 2024 respectively, should there be no improvement during the next two years leading to the polls. The key concerns include: the perception of a shrinking political space, the internal dynamics within the 3 main political parties, the future of Mozambique’s multi-party democracy, the sustainability of the Maputo Peace Accords, the escalating security and humanitarian situation in the northern Cabo Delgado Province and the risk of expansion to neighboring provinces, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the continued impacts of climate change and the complex economic situation characterized by high debt, slowed growth and rising inequality.
4. Armed violence in the central regions of the country on the one hand, and attacks since 2017 by armed groups with reported extremist ties in the northern province of Cabo Delgado have resulted in hundreds of casualties and more than 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Serious abuses and growing human rights violations reportedly committed by the armed groups and national security forces have prompted the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2020 to call upon all actors to take urgent measures to protect civilians in Cabo Delgado.
5. In the electoral legislation front, the need for yet another reform was a recurring theme throughout the needs assessment. Recommendations for electoral reforms

have been made in the last 20 years by previous NAMs by various observer groups and by and large, they are still applicable. The underlying problems highlighted over the last 20 years seem to persist, such as: the existence of inconsistencies or discrepancies in the electoral legislation, the late adoption of the amendments to the electoral laws, the perception of a lack of political will to implement or enforce the existing laws, etc.

6. Though the increase in the representation of women in political life in Mozambique is noticeable, there are still concerns about the achievement of gender parity as noted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ahead of Mozambique's UPR session in May 2021. Indeed, the legal framework does not provide for special measures to ensure women's representation in elected positions or on party lists. The political arena is still mainly male-dominated and several constraints continue to negatively affect women's engagement with the electoral process, both as voters and candidates.
7. All the interlocutors met by the NAM regard and accept the UN as an impartial and credible partner with a high level of technical expertise in electoral matters. They all expect that the Organization continues to accompany Mozambique and that a well calibrated UN electoral support could contribute to creating a more conducive environment for holding inclusive, credible, transparent and peaceful elections in 2023 and 2024.

Recommendations

To the United Nations

8. The NAM recommends the continuation of UN electoral support to Mozambique for the 2022-2025 electoral cycle. Given the long experience in this field in the country, UNDP is the agency best placed to establish an electoral assistance project, basket fund and take the lead on electoral assistance activities. The NAM recommends that UN electoral assistance be delivered, until 31 December 2025, through a UNDP-led integrated project with several components, tailored to the needs of Mozambican stakeholders and under the premise of national ownership. For various reasons, including fund-raising, UN assistance should be streamlined and show a One-UN approach to appeal to potential donors, with the overall objective of strengthening national ownership and the institutional capacities of the national institutions (Electoral Management Bodies, the Judiciary, the legislative bodies, etc.). Under this umbrella project, and depending on their mandate and their capacity in terms of human resources, each UN entity could continue spearheading UN efforts in specific areas: for instance, UN Women on women's political participation in elections; UNESCO on efforts aiming to support the culture of peace and non-violence, media training and prevention of hate speech; OHCHR on support to justice institutions and protection entities such as human rights commission and promoting of civic space and free press, etc. The UN system will benefit from the presence of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in the country in this regard.

9. The relevant UN entities (UNDP, UN Women, UNESCO, UNHCR, OHCHR) would therefore need to coordinate and streamline efforts and look for synergies when feasible. This would prevent them from being seen or perceived as competitors:
 - There is a potential for collaboration regarding voter registration of IDPs between UNHCR, UNDP (Legal Identity Project based in Brussels, SEAM Project and Rule of Law, Peacebuilding) and UN Women and such collaboration should be explored.
 - On gender related activities, UN Women and UNDP should collaborate to maximize their synergy by avoiding any duplications and ensuring coherence and complementary support.
 - UNESCO, UNDP, OHCHR and the RCO should explore areas for future collaboration which may include civic education, media training on election reporting, misinformation/disinformation, hate speech, training of judges, participation of youth in the electoral processes and prevention of election-related violence.
 - OHCHR and UNDP-SEAM Project should collaborate on human rights issues pertaining to the electoral processes, such as support to protection institutions like the NHRI, inclusion of specific groups including migrants, PWDs, older persons and detainees, and capacity building of security forces on relevant standards.
10. To respond to the stakeholders' expectations, and subject to availability of resources, the UN electoral assistance to the upcoming electoral cycle should focus on targeted activities with the potential to effectively enhance and safeguard the transparency, inclusiveness and integrity of the electoral process, as well as the credibility of the Mozambican electoral system and institutions. In the period leading to the 2023/2024 elections, UNDP could support a thorough reflection on key recommendations of past electoral observer missions. UNDP technical expertise and South-South relations could bring added value to a broad and inclusive discussion on the way forward. Based on the most common views expressed during the needs assessment, such review and analysis could include subjects of key importance such as sustainable voter registration, results management, electoral dispute resolution, electoral budgets, costs of elections, access to information and resources, civic education and accountability.
11. As elections are expected to likely dominate the Mozambican political landscape from next year, the RC's good offices' roles would ensure effective and coordinated UN political interventions at the highest level. While maintaining neutrality as the UN, it would be important for the Resident Coordinator to have a convening role in coordinating international partners, particularly regarding political messaging around elections. The NAM would therefore recommend that the Resident Coordinator ensure coordination with key Ambassadors, to help bring coherence to the international community's messaging and approach on political dialogue and elections.

12. The NAM recommends also that the Resident Coordinator coordinates the various election-related political interventions by the UN agencies, funds and programmes in the country and be the main channel of communication for the entire United Nations system with national stakeholders (authorities, political parties) and international partners.
13. At the technical and operational level, the NAM recommends the continuation, under UNDP lead, of the two existing mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of the umbrella electoral support project and the management of the elections basket fund: (i) the **steering committee**, to determine the main directions of the project and ensure coordination between the national authorities and the partners supporting the electoral process through the basket fund; (ii) the **technical committee**, to ensure the daily monitoring of all partners' activities and the complementarity and synchronization of actions. The terms of reference for these coordination mechanisms will be developed in due course.
14. The composition of the existing coordination mechanisms at the technical level may be revisited (if necessary, streamlined) so that relevant UN entities, other election providers (such as EISA, IDEA), EMBs, donors and some key CSOs could be brought together to avoid duplication and ensure coherence in the electoral support. Given the large number of CSOs, a separate coordination forum, targeting the CSOs may be created separately. Legal support (review of the electoral legislations, support to the judiciary and election dispute resolution) was one of the areas that was already supported or planned to be supported by several donors and the UN. Therefore, coordination among the UN and partners would be important to avoid duplication.
15. Given the fluid political and security situation and the impact this could have in the electoral process, the NAM strongly recommend an in-person follow-up mission closer to the 2023 elections, should the conditions allow. While the above parameters apply for the whole cycle, the follow-up mission close to the elections could indeed allow to reassess and define more clearly any necessary adjustments to the support being provided.

To the international partners

16. The NAM recommends that the international partners: (i) continue to support the Government in its efforts to improve the political, social, justice and security environment to create conditions conducive to the organization of inclusive, transparent and peaceful elections; (ii) consider the possibility of providing financial or technical support in complement to the contributions of the Government and the United Nations; (iii) actively participate in the coordination frameworks set up in the run-up to the elections in order, inter alia, to bring coherence to the international community's messaging; (iv) consider the deployment of election observer missions and, in parallel, support domestic observer missions with a view to contributing to the transparency of the process.

To the national stakeholders

17. Given the current security situation in the north of the country, it would be very important to start planning for voter registration well in advance, with a particular focus on the IDPs, in coordination with relevant government, security entities, UN agencies, funds and programmes and partners. This would ensure that not only the IDPs are not disenfranchised, but also that due consideration is given to the possibility for the IDPs to cast votes, wherever they be at the time of election, for their constituencies of origin in the sub-national elections.
18. Any electoral reform should aim to address recurring themes such as the need to harmonize the electoral legislation for all elections and should be undertaken well in advance of the elections. A particular attention should be given to the timely approval of the law governing district elections, which we be held for the first time in Mozambique during the upcoming electoral cycle.
19. The implementation rate of the observers' recommendations from the previous electoral processes remains very low. Effectively considering and implementing key recommendations broadly agreed upon by relevant stakeholders would send a strong signal of a genuine willingness to take meaningful steps towards improving the conduct of electoral processes in Mozambique. Some of the recommendations may even be reflected in the EMBs' policies, guidelines and regulations ahead of the next elections to the greatest extent possible, such as:
 - The disaggregation by age, gender, disability of the data on voter turnout, polling staff, candidates, etc. so that it can inform policies, guidelines and activities for greater inclusion.
 - The improvement of polling staff training by tailoring the needs of the vulnerable groups such as PWDs, the elderly and pregnant women in polling stations; the usefulness of developing a disability and inclusion manual for future elections; and ensuring that civic/voter education and communications materials are also tailored for PWDs such as using braille, audio, etc.
20. The National Assembly may consider introducing temporary special measures for women and youth, particularly for the Local Authority and National Assembly elections. Similarly political parties are encouraged to adopt a women's quota for political party candidates.
21. The Government is encouraged to create a conducive environment for holding inclusive, credible, transparent and peaceful elections by ensuring a level playing field throughout the electoral processes.

