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### **CALLS FOR DENUNCIATION AND VIGILANCE IN A CONTEXT OF FRAGILE STATE: RECONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF RETURNED POPULATIONS**

**João Feijó**

#### **SUMMARY**

Over the course of 2023, security was consolidated around the large perimeter of Afungi, the epicentre of one of the region's largest economic projects. Despite the weakening of the rebel group, armed groups continue to circulate south of Mocímboa da Praia, maintaining pressure on the Afungi project, while threatening north-south road traffic in the province, destabilising returning populations. This Destaque Rural describes the attempts to reconstruct public services in the north-east of the province, as well as the people's efforts to re-establish economic activities, in a scenario marked by uncertainty and precariousness. It is argued that the budget deficit and the diversion of public spending to the security sector, the destruction of infrastructure and equipment and the demotivation of state employees have aggravated the fragility of the institutions. In this context, government representatives continue to emphasise concepts of "*terrorism*", calling for the "*vigilance*" and "*denunciation*" of the population, showing little assertiveness in tackling complex social problems.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

While a sense of security has been consolidated around the large perimeter of Afungi over the course of 2023, which can be seen in the return of the population to their production sites, armed guerrilla movements continue to take place to the south of Mocímboa da Praia. The insurgents continue to put pressure on the TotalEnergies security perimeter and threaten north-south road traffic in the province, while destabilising the returning populations. After describing the security conditions in the province and the population's return movements, the aim of the text is to understand the process of state reconstruction in the north-east of the province, as well as the process of socio-economic reintegration of the populations. The data comes from interviews with individuals from nine districts affected by the conflict (Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Nangade, Mueda, Muidumbe, Macomia, Quissanga, Montepuez and Chiúre), government officials and non-governmental organisations, as well as data from the International Organisation for Migration.

## 1. SECURITY AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS

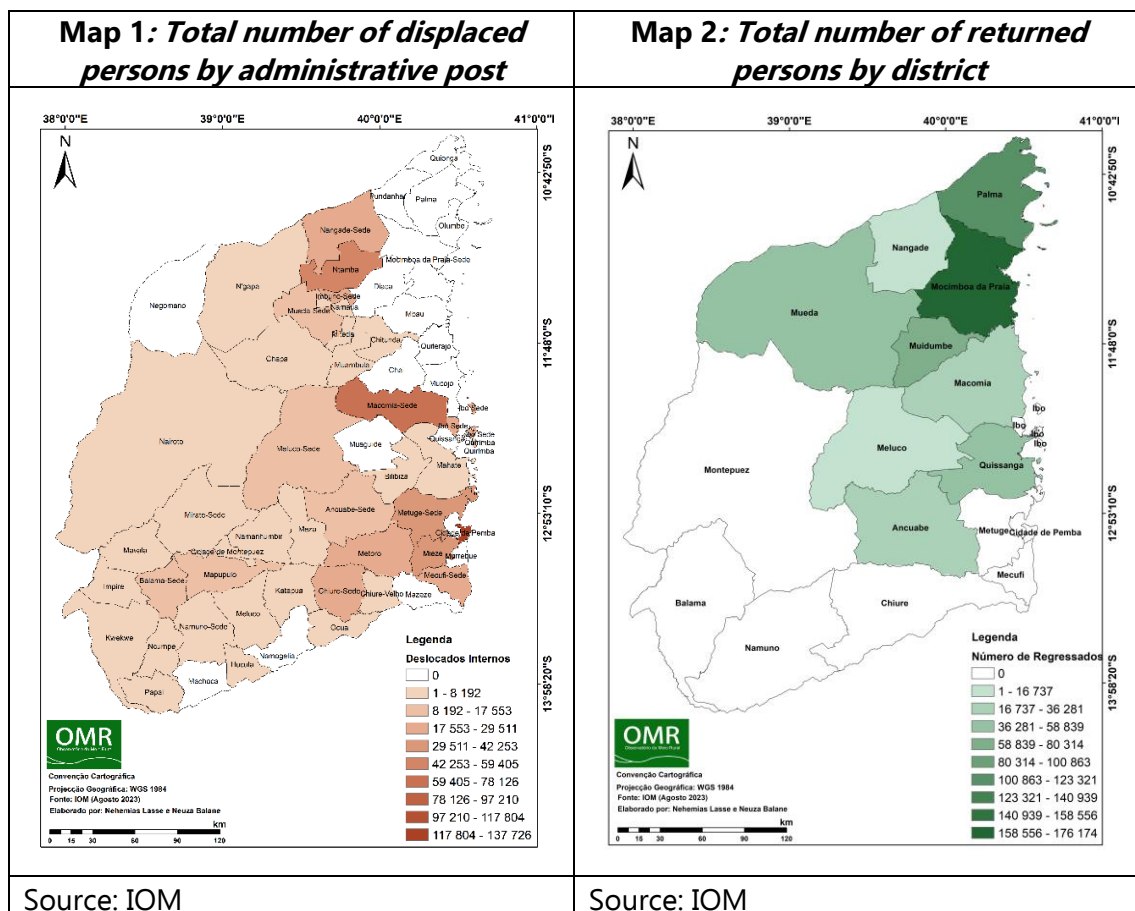
Throughout the Palma district, the security situation has returned to normal, with a large part of the population returning to their farmland, especially along the coast. Since February 2023, when a group of insurgents kidnapped a local woman in the village of Maputo (Cabo Ligado, 21.02.2023), in the locality of Quelimane, on the border between the districts of Palma and Mocímboa da Praia, there have been no recorded incidents along the R762 road linking the two district headquarters. However, the technicians in Afungi continue to travel outside the camp under military escort. The existence of Rwandan armed forces and military intelligence are also responsible for the feeling of security in the main village of Mocímboa Praia, but also to the north of the village, where many have returned to their farms. However, in the administrative post of Mbau, the situation remains uncertain, especially after the attack on the village of Naquitengue ("Carta", 18.09.2023). The murder of 12 people frightened the population, who are afraid to return. As was the case in 2018 and 2019, the district's headquarters is starting to witness a concentration of people fleeing from neighbouring villages. Also in the west of the municipality, there are reports of fears of displacement to the farms, especially in areas further away from homes or the main access routes. The district's major production is concentrated in the fishing sector, where there is a high quantity and quality of fish. A large part of the population that has returned to the fishing villages south of Mocímboa da Praia, and particularly in the Macomia district, risks living with the insurgency, whose members buy local products at generous prices (Cabo Ligado, 28.06.2023).

In Nangade, many families are returning to their villages of origin. Others have started circular movements to production areas, to clear the cashew groves and then pick cashew nuts and resell them in the main village. Many are not moving away from the district centre for good, but are waiting for confirmation of the security conditions. In the district of Muidumbe, although a large part of the population lives in the highlands, there have been population movements to the low-lying areas, where there has been an increase in the area under cultivation (for example, in the villages of Ntxinga, Muambula and Namacande). The situation is worsening in Chitunda and Menguelewa and in the areas closest to Lake Nguri, where the situation remains insecure. November's attacks in the low-lying areas of the district forced hundreds of people to return to the highlands, alarming the inhabitants of the villages of Muambula and Nampanha, who spend the night in the bush.

On the Quissanga coast, people moved around calmly until October 2023, when several episodes triggered the circulation of rumours, reviving fears among the population. Mozambican military personnel who had called a meeting with the population to appeal for vigilance were mistaken for insurgents wearing identical uniforms. This supposed sighting of rebel groups led the population to take refuge in the mangroves. Rumours are circulating of heavy vehicles with tinted windows luring people and transporting them to unknown places. In the north of Bilibiza there is still some fear of displacement to the more remote production areas, especially in the forests of Cagembe, near a former base

of the rebel group, where armed insurgents were spotted in October 2023 (Mediafax, 30.10.2023).

The data provided by the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix for August 2023 shows greater geographical dispersion, namely a lower concentration of the population in the south of the province, namely in the districts of Metuge Sede, Metodo (Ancuabe district), Mapupulo (Montepuez district) and Chiúre Sede (Map 1) and a high number of people returning to the districts of Mocímboa da Praia and Palma (map 2). IOM data shows that the total number of people returning to Mocímboa da Praia (176,174 individuals) is higher than the displaced population in any district.



Despite the fact that there are still incidents between the military and the population (such as locals being assaulted, allegedly for taking photos in areas close to Defence and Security Forces (FDS/Forças de Defesa e Segurança - FDS) positions), the frequency of these reports has decreased significantly, at least compared to the period before 2022. However, the overzealousness of the FDS in that period marked the dominant representation of the population about the Mozambican military. Along Macomia's roads, many drivers are afraid to give the FADM a lift.

In the low-lying areas of Muidumbe (in the administrative post of Chitunda), the population is defended by the FDS and there are not many reports of tensions, at least compared to the coast. However, there is still little trust in the military, whom they accuse of being ineffective<sup>1</sup>. There are conflicts related to the military's involvement with local women, partners of militia members.

The population of the north-east clearly favours foreign troops. In Nangade, many people praise the Tanzanian soldiers, to whom they attribute responsibility for improving security. Unlike the Mozambican troops, the Tanzanians are capable of supplying water to the population, as well as communicating in the languages of northern Mozambique. Similarly, the Rwandans speak *Swahili* and show empathy in their dealings with the locals, greeting the population with kindness. Stories circulate of small traders in Mocímboa da Praia who offer products to Rwandan soldiers when they go to the markets. Despite earning a lower salary, the Mozambican soldiers have to pay for the same products. The press has reported recurring salary delays and logistical problems (Integrity, 07.11.2023). Around Afungi, military personnel openly express their discontent at the low salaries they receive, which are lower than the rewards of the TotalEnergies employees and subcontractors whom they are protecting. Alleged delays in the payment of allowances by Mozambique LNG (operated by TotalEnergies) to the task force protecting Afungi<sup>2</sup> could affect the military's relationship with the population. Many soldiers complain that they are not properly recognised by the population - especially in comparison with their Rwandan counterparts, who enjoy better operational conditions (in terms of logistics, transport equipment and rewards) - and remain suspicious of the locals' involvement with the insurgency.

The local force has emerged as an important player in Cabo Delgado province, obtaining a legal framework (Decree 15/2023 of 14 April), increasing the number of troops and access to logistics. These militias are mainly made up of local people and include Makonde individuals (mostly Christians and Frelimo sympathisers), in a process strongly framed by the Association of Combatants of the National Liberation Struggle (Associação dos Combatentes da Luta de Libertação Nacional - ACLLN). In Mueda and Muidumbe, the local force is present on the access roads to residential areas, checking identification documents and charging money to those who don't have it. In Palma In the last quarter

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<sup>1</sup>Since 2019, in the Muidumbe district, the arrival of the military was seen by many locals as an omen of an attack by the insurgents, without the former being able to protect the population. The local population even chased the military out of Namacande and Chitunda, where, in the latter case, they burned a military tent.

<sup>2</sup> In his report on the socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights situation around Afungi, consultant Jean-Christophe Rufin recognised that the payment of low salaries to unprepared soldiers encouraged abuses against civilians. In this report commissioned by TotalEnergies, the consultant had reservations about the memorandum of understanding between Mozambique LNG and the FADM, questioning the deterrent role of paying performance bonuses on possible abuses. According to him, the existence of this agreement involved the Mozambique LNG consortium in any act of human rights violation promoted by the security forces, without it having any authority over the process of commanding, supervising and penalising those responsible. On the other hand, the agreement directly involved the consortium in a conflict triggered by Mozambican citizens rebelling against the state.

of 2023, members of the local force began requesting birth certificates and identity cards to open bank accounts, in the hope of receiving public subsidies. There are growing voices claiming that the local force is increasingly able to put pressure on the government, with a view to obtaining better logistical conditions or priority service at the Civil Identification Directorates or the Tax Authority, in order to request an ID card or NUIT.

While in the predominantly Makonde area, reports indicate that the population is relatively satisfied with the local militias (locally known as "Rwanda 2"), the situation is different in Chiúre, especially in the post-election period. In the village of Chiúre, the local force is accused of being overzealous, ordering residents to curfew at night or to switch off music players. The elections have aggravated the local force's relationship with the population. At the end of a controversial process (voter registration outside the municipality, transport on election day and priority on polling day for civil servants, problems with the vote count, among others), many local young people (mostly informal vendors) got involved in post-election demonstrations. The response of the police authorities was violent, with the support of elements of the local force, who were transported in the same vehicles as the police. In the aftermath of the violence, several young people were shot by the police. According to reports, the brutality of the local force was even greater than that of the police. Among the displaced population, this situation brought to mind the episodes of overzealousness by the FFDS in the first half of 2020 in the north-east of the province, which was followed by the insurgents' attack on the main village of Mocímboa da Praia. This fear has led some individuals to consider returning.

Greater control of the border with Tanzania and of sea and land routes has affected the logistics of the insurgent groups. Difficulties in accessing food have led to a reduction in the number of operatives, but also in the number of civilians (the elderly and women, who have joined voluntarily or have been kidnapped). According to their messages to the population, the insurgent group is not short of weapons, but of operatives, and their recruitment strategies are being maintained. However, the strategy of improving relations with the coastal population and acquiring products at generous prices seems to have improved logistical supplies. Judging by the photos of the attacks circulated by the Islamic State, a large part of the insurgents are still quite young. There are still reports of attempts to recruit young people to join the insurgency, usually in exchange for money (allegedly twenty thousand meticaís). Only those recruitment attempts that have been reported to the authorities are known.

There are reports of insurgents giving themselves up to the Rwandans, many of whom are very weak (allegedly malnourished or suffering from tuberculosis), but the truth is that the lack of information about their whereabouts is fuelling fears about their safety after desertion. There is still a great mystery surrounding the integration of the repentant. Residents of Mocímboa da Praia suspect that many insurgents take refuge with their families of origin.

There are reports of pre-adolescents being held in prisons in Cabo Delgado, in precarious conditions, captured in the bush. The detention of minors without trial is justified by the

fact that they handle firearms (assembling and disassembling them quite skilfully) and have sensitive information for public security.

## **2. THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES**

In the north of the province there is a slow recovery of public services. The facilities of the old rural hospital in Mocímboa da Praia remain destroyed and a new unit is operating where the health training centre used to be. Apart from the district headquarters, access to healthcare is still possible, often through mobile units, and there is still a shortage of nurses and medicines, which, when they do exist, are mainly paracetamol and quarten. The role of the state continues to be largely complemented by non-governmental organisations, such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. In Mocímboa da Praia and Nangade, the Rwandan, Tanzanian or Lesotho armed forces facilitate access for local populations to their military hospitals on specific days of the week. There are no reports of access to military medicine in Mozambique. On the contrary, the dominant discourse is one of mistrust and not allowing people to go near the barracks.

In the south of the province, work has been carried out to rehabilitate the health unit in Quissanga, which already provides maternity and hospitalisation services. The health workers themselves now live in the district headquarters. In Montepuez, the return of many displaced people has reduced the pressure on health services, and the Mapupulo health centre has been upgraded.

There is a tendency for education to stabilise in the districts of Palma, to the north and west of Mocímboa da Praia, in the highlands of Muidumbe, in Mueda and Quissanga. According to people on the ground, pressure from the government has had an impact on the return of teachers. In the district of Mueda, where many displaced people were once concentrated, the number of students is falling. In several schools near the displacement centres of Mapupulo (Montepuez district), the persistence of many individuals affected by the conflict (mostly Makonde) is reflected in ratios of up to one teacher to 200 students. Attempts to expand classes are not accompanied by the proportional hiring of teachers.

In areas of greater military instability, the resumption of teaching activities remains problematic. Outside the main villages of Nangade and Macomia, in the low-lying areas of Muidumbe (Chitunda administrative post), and to the south of Mocímboa da Praia (Mbau administrative post), few schools have reopened. As a result of improved security, in the Nangade district it is hoped that classes will resume in many villages in the 2024 school year.

Insecurity and population displacement have made it difficult to manage the teaching staff. Despite the general lack of teachers in educational institutions, there are still teachers without schools, waiting to return to the places where they used to teach. Many



teachers are psychologically affected by the war and the experience of fleeing, fearing to return to the north-east of the province.

The District Services for Economic Activities are following the trend of the other public services. In the north-east of the province, technicians face problems of destroyed infrastructure, a reduced budget and a shortage of work equipment.

Agriculture continues to be prioritised - there are reports of agricultural inputs being distributed in Mueda, Diaca (Mocímboa da Praia) or Quissanga, to the detriment of fishing. Along the coast, between the village of Mocímboa da Praia and the district of Macomia, and along the Messalo river basin as far as Lake Nguri (covering the districts of Macomia, Meluco and Muidumbe) there are no safe conditions to support economic activities.

In terms of reconstruction, priority has been given to transportation facilities to ensure the security of the territory and logistical access to Afungi. Highlights include the port and airport at Mocímboa da Praia, and the road from Afungi to Olumbi. The Nangade aerodrome was also rehabilitated. With regard to public facilities, the reconstruction process has been slower, with much of the infrastructure remaining damaged. The house of the mayor of Mocímboa da Praia has been rehabilitated, and construction is underway on buildings for a court, INSS and police command in the same village. The rehabilitation of the headquarters of the chiefs of post has been sidelined. In Quissanga, the health centre and maternity unit, primary school and police command have been rehabilitated, and the road, which until then had been covered in grass, has been cleaned.

In Muidumbe, the electricity network has been rebuilt (with posts being distributed to Nchinga, Namacande) and water supply support has been provided in some villages. In the district headquarters, the public offices (administrator's office, civil registry and auditorium) remain destroyed. Due to the drought, many wells in Mocímboa da Praia are lacking water, against a backdrop of population growth, worsening living conditions.

In the second half of 2023, financial institutions reopened in areas previously affected by the conflict, namely in Quissanga and the village of Palma. An ATM was set up in Mocímboa da Praia and there was already a service counter in Afungi.

In the north-east of the province, the administration of justice has yet to be re-established. In the districts affected by the war, a stable registration and notary system has yet to be implemented, which in many places has been operating through mobile brigades with external support. In Palma, TotalEnergies has provided containers to house the prosecutor's office, the court and the IPAJ, but the magistrates' offices have been destroyed or are occupied by the district administration. Attempts to move the courts have not been successful, as the magistrates do not have the means to travel. In this situation, dozens of suspects are still being held in precarious conditions, awaiting trial or transfer to Mueda. In Mocímboa da Praia, the construction of a new court and the

rehabilitation of the prosecutor's office building, vandalised by the insurgency, are awaited. The situation is similar in Muidumbe, Macomia and Quissanga.

Many complaints are made to foreign defence and security forces, namely Rwandan military and police (in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia) or Tanzanian military (in Nangade). The matters are then forwarded to the Mozambican police. The interlocutors claim that, unlike the national forces, the foreign authorities are not influenced by ties of familiarity or bribes, making the complaint less risky. The preference for foreigners has caused some discomfort in the Police of the Republic of Mozambique, which has started some awareness-raising campaigns among the population. In Muidumbe, many disputes (*milandos*) are resolved by the local force, which, if it can't resolve them, refers them to the Police of the Republic of Mozambique.

As in other parts of the country, the introduction of the Single Salary Scale (TSU) has profoundly affected the motivation of public servants. In Mocímboa da Praia, discontent was particularly evident in the involvement in the election campaign, which was reportedly less enthusiastic than in previous elections. At ceremonies celebrating Victory Day (25 September), many teachers chanted, ironically, "*even without TSU, we're going to work*". Teachers' attendance has dropped considerably, with reports of staff not turning up for work for several weeks. There is a laxity in the control of absences, in an attempt to reduce labour tensions during the election period. In education, monitoring is practically non-existent and external visits are generally directed to schools closer to the district headquarters villages and better organised. According to teachers interviewed, many schools can go five to seven years without receiving any external visits.

The silent strike in the civil service has had the greatest impact on the health sector, where, according to the respondents, the quality of care has declined. In addition to the problems of destroyed infrastructure, the lack of medical equipment and the shortage of medicines (allegedly "you only go to the health centre to get a prescription"), there is also greater neglect on the part of staff and the continuation of illicit charges. The situation worsens in maternity wards, where care is heavily dependent on monetary payments. When asked for help, nurses at health centres in Montepuez respond bluntly: "*n'wanriyeque alhilhayo*" (wait for the person who ate [money]).

Bribes are paid in other public services, to the clear detriment of their quality. Because of the need to issue identity cards, there are huge crowds at the Civil Identification Directorate in Nangade. Allegedly, just to get a space to enter the civil registry, it is necessary to pay money to the technicians on duty. The many problems that exist in the province create opportunities for generating income, often illicitly. Poorly informed, without proof, without institutions to turn to and without any guarantee of protection, the situation of citizens is particularly precarious.



### 3. HUMANITARIAN AID AND PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

In the province, there has been a decrease in support for displaced populations. United Nations experts are concerned about the lack of funding for the humanitarian response, which has only reached 29 % of needs. In the places closest to urban centres (Pemba, Montepuez, Chiúre, Mueda and Mocímboa da Praia), aid is increasingly made up of vouchers for 4,230 meticais. In Chiúre, the distribution of vouchers in the resettlement centres is accompanied by the arrival of local traders, who sell their products, usually at higher prices than in the village. The support is generally insufficient and is sometimes distributed in some neighbourhoods alternately, generating jealousies and conflicts.

On the other hand, there are reports of spatial asymmetries in the distribution of food support. While in Muidumbe there has been no distribution since May 2023 (allegedly because the population has resumed production), in Quissanga there are reports of 50kg bags of rice being distributed to each family. In Nangade, food distribution is concentrated in the displacement centres, excluding those who have remained living in the district headquarters village. Sometimes non-governmental organisations distribute kitchen utensils, blankets, mats, etc.

Food distribution continues to be an opportunistic process. There are still reports of people moving between districts (from Mueda to Mapupulo in Montepuez or between Pemba and Quissanga) whenever news of food vouchers circulates. Although many people have already returned to Palma and Mocímboa da Praia, Quissanga and the highlands of Muidumbe, the number of displaced people announced by the IOM (627,846) in August 2023 is still higher than the total population recorded in the 2017 census in the 8 affected districts<sup>3</sup> (591,734 people). In the south of the province, the reduction in the number of displaced people has attenuated the feeling of invasion on the part of the local populations. In Montepuez, there is a tendency for displaced people to give up land to access production areas.

Around Afungi and stimulated by TotalEnergies, animal and vegetable production areas are being consolidated. In the village of Palma, trade is flourishing around the market, boosted by the opening of the border with Tanzania at Namoto (MediaFax, 13.09.2023). All along the coast to the north of Mocímboa da Praia, fish production has increased, boosting trade between the coast and the plateau. Every day, transport vans drive from the coast to Mueda, Nangade or Montepuez (with fish), sometimes bringing grain from the inland. After the attack on Naquitenge in October 2023, suspicions of food supplies to the insurgents increased, so controls on the movement of goods became tighter. Transporting food requires credentials issued by the district agricultural services or a neighbourhood declaration, at the risk of being blocked at checkpoints and forced to return. Obstacles to transport can be found at the gates along the roads. Drivers of semi-

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<sup>3</sup> These are the districts of Palma (where 62,667 individuals were registered), Mocímboa da Praia (123,975), Macomia (116,405), Quissanga (50,174), Ibo (13,025), Nangade (88,995), Muidumbe (99,363) and Meluco (37,130).

collective passenger transport have become used to paying money to police, military personnel and the local force, making circulation more flexible but making it more difficult to inspect passengers and goods. In areas where military escorts operate, authorisation to travel without an escort requires the payment of money, calculated according to the goods. Under these conditions, the inspection and consequent identification of irregular goods (such as the transport of undocumented drugs) tends to happen when a passenger refuses to pay the "soft drink". In the municipality areas, the main victims of extortion continue to be motorbike taxi drivers. In Chiúre, the municipal police allegedly charge each driver without a driving licence 100 meticaís. Those with a driving licence are not exempt from paying money to the municipal police, allegedly on the grounds that "*we own the road*" or "*what are we going to eat?*"

In the south of the province, various projects have been implemented to support small local traders, in the area of small businesses, the preservation and sale of fish, sewing activities and small workshops. Although some beneficiaries have implemented the respective projects, there is no shortage of episodes of resale or consumption of the support obtained. In Quissanga, Chiúre or Montepuez, many donations (food, crockery, sewing machines or mini-freezers) were resold locally, either to finance other goods or services or to sponsor trips back to the north-east of the country.

In Mocímboa da Praia, the UNDP hires local people to carry out rehabilitation work on public infrastructure, making payments via Mpesa and providing dozens of jobs.

In a scenario of widespread poverty, there continues to be a lot of promiscuous behaviour. In Muidumbe, there have been reports of women getting involved with soldiers in the hope of obtaining monetary support. In Montepuez, there are reports of pregnancies among 13 and 14 year old girls, despite numerous prevention talks. When asked why, the answer tends to be "suffering", implying sexual involvement in exchange for money. During awareness-raising activities, many teenagers confess that they have already started having sex. The truth is that as soon as the initiation rites are over, the girls are considered adults and pressurised to contribute to household expenses. According to local activists, many teenage girls learn that "*I can't be afraid of any man*" or that "*nlopuana kankala imoca*" (man can't be the only one). In a scenario of extreme poverty and gender inequalities, the male partner tends to be represented as a provider of well-being, alleviating situations of deprivation.

Petty theft is another alternative source of income. In Mocímboa da Praia, the theft of public lighting panels or illegal energy diversions has become widespread. With the arrival of rainy season and the densification of the vegetation, an increase in mining practices is expected, particularly around the Namanhumbir mines.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Over the course of 2023, security was consolidated around a radius of 60 to 80 km from Afungi, the epicentre of one of the largest gas liquefaction projects, led by TotalEnergies. Security is noticeable in the calm countenance of the FDS, the return of the population to the production areas and the community celebration of religious holidays.

Despite logistical weakness, casualties in the rebel group's leadership and a reduction in operatives, non-state armed groups continue to circulate along the coast from Macomia to Quissanga, as well as along the Messalo river basin, as far as Lake Nguri, affecting security in Macomia district and the low-lying areas of Muidumbe. People's fears of returning to their farmland or the proliferation of rumours mistaking FADM elements for armed insurgents (who wear the same uniform) are important indicators of instability. Remaining close to Afungi's security perimeter, the insurgency continues to exert pressure on the economic project, while threatening north-south traffic in the province, destabilising returning populations. While inland, where the predominantly Makonde population has organised itself into militias, the reports highlight the violence of the insurgents (looting, destruction of houses, kidnappings and murders), in the coastal areas the reports show relationships of economic cooperation with the insurgents, allowing us to understand the persistence of support among sectors of the population.

Improved security relations have reduced episodes of military violence against the population. However, the lack of incidents does not mean an increase in the population's confidence in the FDS, who continue to be represented as violent, ineffectual and opportunistic, especially in comparison with international troops. The Rwandan troops remain highly popular, showing sensitivity in their dealings with locals, for example in the diplomatic way they prevented post-election demonstrations in the district of Mocimboa da Praia. The local force is emerging as a new player on the ground, both in terms of numbers (government voices speak of 5,000 troops) and government support. While on the Makonde plateau this group represented an ecological response to the lack of security, in predominantly Makhuwas or Mwanis areas its acceptance is more contested, especially after the post-election incidents in Chiúre, where elements of the local force took part in the repression of local youths. The emergence of an armed group with specific ethno-political connotations (led by former combatants and mostly made up of Makondes or supporters of the Frelimo party) means an increased burden for the state during the conflict or in future demobilisation scenarios, raising political challenges in a post-President Nyusi scenario. In addition, the local force is not involved in human rights training, against a backdrop of the absence of justice institutions.

The increase in public debt, the diversion of public spending to the security sector, the destruction of infrastructure and equipment, the reduction in the real salary of civil servants and their motivation have further weakened public institutions. Poor working conditions and laxity in public administration are a stimulus for opportunistic practices. Corruption has become systemic (characterised by countless civil servants), endemic

(encompassing other sectors of society) and syndromic (resulting in the poor operation of public services and the inability to provide assistance to citizens)

Without information, support or legal assistance, without evidence and institutions of justice (or when they exist, they are highly corruptible), the populations have no place to turn. In an area that will be the site of one of the biggest gas investments on the African continent, it remains extremely difficult to build the rule of law. The complicit silence of the authorities fuels feelings of state against the population, with the potential for political capitalisation by violent groups. In public meetings, government representatives continue to emphasise concepts of "terrorism", calling for the population to be "vigilant" and "denounce" phenomena of generalised injustice, which mainly affect the most disadvantaged. In the way it is used, the concept of "terrorism" not only fails to distinguish the terror provoked in the population by the various armed actors in the province (State and non-State), but also fails to capture the logic of the insurgents' co-operation with sectors of the population, without whom they would never have succeeded.

Military instability and population movements are reflected in the education system, with thousands of children and teachers displaced, high student-teacher ratios, children not enrolled or interruptions to the school year. Health care remains very precarious, heavily dependent on support from international organisations. In the north of the province, SDAE support continues to be concentrated in predominantly agricultural areas where mainly Makondes live, reproducing the state's perception of inequality.

In this scenario, some recommendations are suggested:

- Investment in health conditions, involving Mozambican military health services in the areas where the population returns, similar to foreign armed forces;
- Massive support for the education sector, not forgetting the construction of public residences for returning teachers, involving local labour in food-for-work systems, teacher training and strengthening supervision.
- Support for food production activities, through the distribution of agricultural and fishing inputs.
- Strengthening and empowering local civil society organisations, involving them in the process of selecting beneficiaries for development projects (based on an analysis of expectations and professional experience), but also training local associations in associative and financial matters.
- Improving access to justice by promoting the installation of a public prosecutor's office, IPAJ and courts, as well as access to civil identification documents.
- Establishing partnerships with (inter)national child support institutions for the social reintegration of child soldiers, using Mozambican staff specialised in the subject.

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