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IN CABO DELGADO

The Provincial Assembly did not supervise the response plan to COVID-19 because the funds were allocated to the Secretary of State

After Tete last April, this time (June) it was the city of Pemba that hosted two events related to the control of the management of public goods: the first was a training on practices and tools for monitoring governance and public services directed to activists from community based organizations in Cabo Delgado; and the second one was the dialogue between Cabo Delgado's government representatives and local civil society organizations about the effectiveness of the implementation of the "Response Plan to COVID-19".





The initiative was promoted by the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) as the host organization of the Budget Monitoring Forum (FMO), with the support of the European Union, as part of the Public Finance Management (PFM) Monitoring project within the implementation of the “COVID-19 Response Plan” in Mozambique. The objective of these actions is to contribute to improve the knowledge of the response to COVID-19 implemented by the Government of Mozambique in all its components at central and local level.

Indeed, the initiative comes in a context where there is widespread recognition of the need for society in general to advocate for improvements in public service delivery. To this end, it is important to empower the demand side of the provision of these services, ensuring that their users are informed about their rights and take actions that will influence the improvement of the quality of governance and public services.

This is a procedure that helps the citizen to build a capacity to analyze, reflect, and act when faced

with situations that constitute mismanagement of public finances. This action starts from adopting a monitoring attitude to demanding accountability from those who do not comply with the standards and norms of public finance management that, in many cases, create deviations of resources from vital services to the population, such as health, education, and social assistance, harming millions of citizens, especially those who live in vulnerable situations.

After the training on governance and public service monitoring practices and tools directed to activists from community-based organizations, the CDD, in partnership with the Citizen’s Observatory for Health (OCS), also held in the city of Pemba, a dialogue between Cabo Delgado government representatives and local civil society organizations on the effectiveness of the implementation of the “COVID-19 Response Plan”. The dialogue aimed at fostering the involvement of Cabo Delgado’s citizens in the public debate on the effectiveness of the implementation of the “Response Plan to COVID-19”, as well as revitalizing the spaces for pu-



blic participation having as target group the community based organizations that follow daily the reality of the communities.

This initiative to create spaces for dialogue between the Government and non-governmental organizations focused on community development allows for the generation of transparency and good governance practices in the effective and efficient management of resources for the response to COVID-19, in particular those resul-

ting from domestic mobilization, thus contributing to an informed citizen participation.

The dialogue was attended by about 50 participants, mostly civil society organization representatives. Opening the event, the Pemba Administrator's representative said that Pemba was the second city where the community broadcast of COVID-19 was declared, after Nampula. "This debate is important for us to understand how we deal with this pandemic. Although it is not in the



report, we had to do small works in the health units of Pemba for the screening of people with symptoms of COVID-19," said the Pemba Administrator's representative.

Part of the funds (USD 700 million) that the Government mobilized with its cooperation partners was invested in the construction/rehabilitation of toilets in primary and secondary schools and vocational training institutes, including, in some cases, the drilling of boreholes and/or connection to the public network. The Education sector was represented by its provincial director, Ivaldo Quincardete. "This debate is important for the Education sector, that is why we have colleagues here who have been and are still working on issues related to COVID-19. The lack of water, the lack of decent toilets in our schools are still major challenges, despite the work done by the Government in creating conditions for the safe return of students."

The top education leader in Cabo Delgado acknowledged, however, that managing the COVID-19 pandemic in schools was a big challenge because the situation coincided with the time when the provincial capital Pemba was receiving

thousands of children displaced due to violent extremism. "It was a challenge because at the same time we were receiving displaced people and we had to frame about two thousand students," said Ivaldo Quincardete. The Councillor and Pemba Municipality representative also spoke of the challenges the city faced in having to take measures to prevent and combat COVID-19 at a time when thousands of displaced victims of violent extremism were arriving in the provincial capital of Cabo Delgado.

The Cabo Delgado provincial Secretary of State's representative used numerical data to show how overwhelming the COVID-19 pandemic was in that part of the country. "We have to keep fighting because COVID-19 is not over yet, despite the reduction in the number of cases. COVID-19 was a new pandemic for all of us. It required a very flexible plan to cope with its dynamics. This explains the divergences noted by the FMO study. There was a need to adapt the response plan each day. When we are in an emergency situation anything goes to save human lives", defended the Cabo Delgado Secretary of State representative.

As for the provincial director of Health in Cabo





Delgado, Anastácia Lidimba, the number of cases of COVID-19 per province is proportional to the amounts spent in response to the pandemic. "We had daily meetings with the Minister about the needs of each province. Some procurement was done at the central level. There was a guideline that all provinces should have a health center to receive exclusively the patients of COVID-19. In Cabo Delgado we transformed the 18 de Outubro Health Center in the city of Pemba into a hospital for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. Besides the rehabilitation of the health center, we had to buy equipment. This budget is not reflected in the FMO study. We assume the mistakes made, but everything was done in the fight against COVID-19," he explained.

The Provincial Assembly of Cabo Delgado was represented by its president, Francisco Loureiro, and members of all benches. In his speech, the leader of the oversight body said that the dialogue is important as it helps the Provincial Assem-

bly to understand the work done by the provincial authorities and the monitoring done by civil society organizations. "The divergence between the data presented in the FMO study and by the health services of Cabo Delgado leaves us with many doubts. The deviations in application may reveal poor planning", President of the Provincial Assembly of Cabo Delgado.

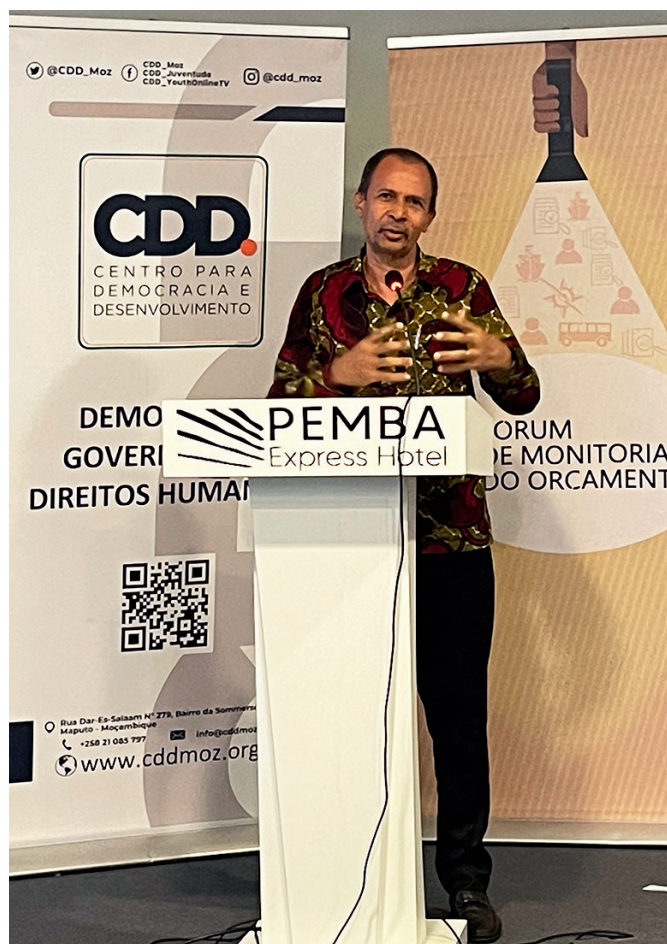
However, other members of the Provincial Assembly made it clear that that body approves plans of the Provincial Executive Council and it is over this body that exercises its oversight function. "As Provincial Assembly we do not have the competence to go to the Secretary of State to inspect funds used in the scope of the COVID-19 prevention. The Provincial Assembly was not informed about the funds destined to fight COVID-19 in Cabo Delgado. Most of the money for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic was transferred to bodies under the Secretary of State of Cabo Delgado".

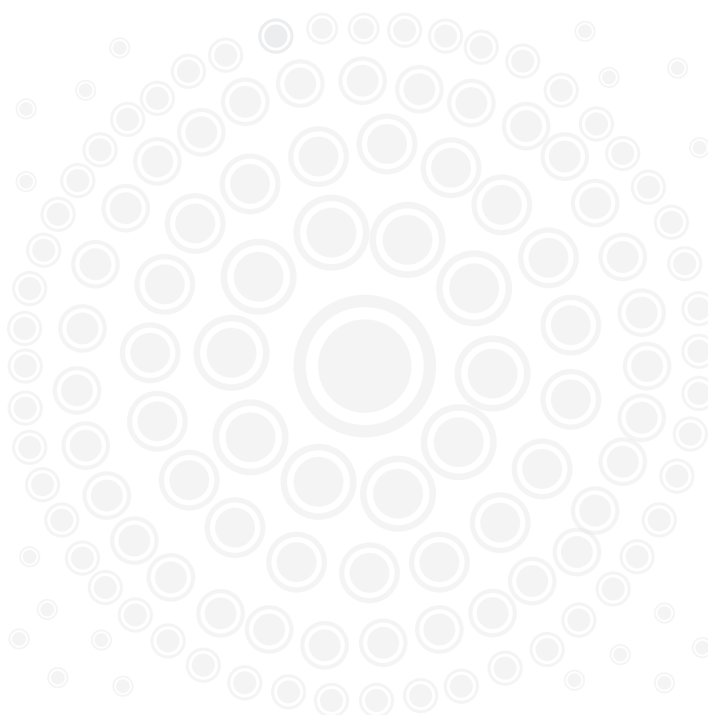
However, many civil society representatives



have questioned where the funds earmarked for vulnerable families to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 have gone. "What happened here in Cabo Delgado is that this money benefited the people who didn't need the help. The vulnerable families didn't receive the money. It's the same thing that is happening now in relation to humanitarian aid for the displaced. The people who are benefiting from this aid are not the displaced, but people who have never been victims of terrorism," said Marta Licuco, a human rights defender.

The activist advocated for holding accountable the people who illicitly benefited from the money that was intended for vulnerable families. "I was saddened when I heard that the Provincial Assembly of Cabo Delgado has done practically no work to inspect the money that came into the province for COVID-19," Marta Licuco regretted. In the dialogue, the National Institute for Social Action (INAS), an agency under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, responsible for the payment of allowances to vulnerable families, was not represented. This situation meant that all the questions raised about the payment of allowances were left without clarification.





FMO Members



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