

## CHAPTER 12

# Empowering Local Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

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### Introduction

Since 2006, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of violent extremist attacks across the African continent. The growth of violent extremism – and the devastating impact of groups espousing violent ideologies – is not only setting in motion a dramatic reversal of Africa’s developmental and democratic gains, but is also threatening to stunt prospects of political and economic development for decades to come. ‘Violent extremism’ refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support the use of violence to achieve ideological, religious, political or socio-economic goals. Definitions of extremism are highly contested, especially in relation to the rights of freedom of expression upheld by liberal democracies.<sup>1</sup> Assessments of extremist threats should include consideration of human and civil rights, including freedom of speech. Nonetheless, today it is impossible to discuss international peace and security without considering extremist groups and the threats they pose.

Islamism, once thought of as a Middle Eastern issue, is now firmly entrenched in Africa and violently promoted by organisations like Al-Shabaab operating in East Africa, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in the Sahel, and Boko Haram operating in West Africa, to name a few. Despite the infiltration of more conservative and militant interpretations of the Muslim faith on the continent, southern African governments have been slow to develop robust responses to this type of threat. Regional security issues and domestic challenges including porous borders, international migration, human trafficking, drugs and

international crime, massive inequality, low social cohesion and corruption are well-researched, but not understood as potential drivers or indicators of extremism. Moreover, in the face of these issues, terrorism is low on the list of regional priorities. However, experts agree that southern African countries, which were previously thought to be immune from these threats due of their geographic distance from epicentre countries like Nigeria and Somalia, have seen an increase in extremist activity in recent years.

This paper focuses on the spread of Islamist ideology to Mozambique, in particular its northern-most province of Cabo Delgado, detailing the erosion of civilian self-protection mechanisms in this region over the past two decades. It looks at strengthening self-protection as a novel way to empower local communities to prevent and counter extremism, but it also problematises this approach in the context of severe state repression and state-sponsored violence against civilians. It concludes with recommendations for the civil organisations, government agencies and private entities working in Mozambique that have vested interests in preventing the entrenchment of extremist groups and the ideologies they espouse.

### **Civilian Self-Protection During Armed Conflicts**

The most commonly used conceptualisation of civilian self-protection comes from Betsy Jose and Peace Medie, who incorporate three core elements into its definition:

- i. actions taken to protect against immediate, direct threats to physical integrity imposed by belligerents or traditional protection actors;
- ii. primarily selected and employed by civilians; and
- iii. employed during an armed conflict.<sup>2</sup>

This conceptualisation is imperfect, because it limits harm to physical threats when in reality civilians rarely make the distinction between threats to their physical integrity and threats to their livelihoods (or their psychosocial wellbeing). It also limits self-protection to contexts of armed conflict and therefore might preclude other types of scenarios that civilians must survive, such as electoral violence, gangsterism, state oppression or incidents of extremist-related violence. It is nonetheless a useful concept, because it acknowledges civilians' agency in their own protection.

Some of the earliest examples of civilian self-protection in the literature come from war anthropology, which focuses on civilian agency and offers detailed ethnographic evidence from in-depth fieldwork on civilian

coping mechanisms to the literature on civilian protection. The work of war anthropologists challenges dominant narratives of civilian victimhood that exist in the literature, which paint international interventionists as saviours and strip authority from civilian accounts of their own condition. It contradicts the ahistorical, universal archetype of the civilian as a victim of war. Instead, evidence from anthropologists' fieldwork shows that civilians are not wholly helpless victims, but rather agents who tactically choose how to respond to violence. Anthropologists' focus on civilian agency, as opposed to macro-political structural explanations for behaviour, reveals that civilians display an incredible amount of resourcefulness to survive. This may include purposefully adopting the role of the victim – the instrumentalisation of victimhood – to access critical sustenance, money or political support.<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Nordstrom, who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Mozambique during its civil war, observed that the formal peace processes did little to assuage the violent circumstances of everyday life for most Mozambicans. She wrote: 'Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this research to me was the tremendous creativity average people employed in surviving and working to resolve the war in Mozambique'.<sup>4</sup>

Historians' accounts of civilians in war have also highlighted local resistance to mass atrocities and political violence, especially prolonged episodes of violence where actors at the micro level were able to limit civilian casualties quite considerably.<sup>5</sup> Resistance refers not only to organised movements, but also the simple and seemingly mundane actions of individuals to oppose, thwart or avoid attacks.<sup>6</sup> Through this historical lens, one could even view stealing food from a Khmer Rouge farming collective as a life-saving act of resistance.<sup>7</sup> The survival of Jewish people during World War II provides myriad other examples of self-protection. The Bielski partisans rescued over 1 000 Jews by relocating at-risk communities to the forest or underground bunkers.<sup>8</sup> Nechama Tec's work on the Bielski partisans seeks to correct widespread assumptions of Jews as passive victims of genocide, and was informed by her own experiences as a Holocaust survivor. Again, acts of resistance can range from the individual (such as the efforts of individual gentiles to smuggle Danish Jews into Sweden, who saved more than 7 000 Jews in a period of approximately three weeks)<sup>9</sup> to the collective (such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on 19 April, 1943).<sup>10</sup> Historians' arguments are less about how many people survived the Holocaust through acts of resistance, but more so about the fact that these survivors owed their rescue to themselves or 'ordinary strangers'.<sup>11</sup>

The more recent focus on civilian self-protection by international relations scholars can be understood as a reaction to the practical and conceptual shortcomings of humanitarian intervention, the protection of civilians and the responsibility to protect. Conversations around protection that focus on paternalistic, state-based and institutional activities perpetuate a salvation paradigm that misses a crucial piece of the protection puzzle.<sup>12</sup> International actors will always be limited in their capacity to save lives, while civilians inherently have agency and the ability to resist. The concept of protection is incomplete if it does not take into consideration how civilians conceive of protection and the actions that they take to protect themselves. Accounts of protection that take civilian actions into consideration offer a bottom-up, empowering paradigm and create a more balanced and robust conversation.<sup>13</sup>

On the heels of this conceptual conversation came a surge of literature that provided empirical evidence of civilian self-protection from secondary sources and original fieldwork. Casey Barrs created a lengthy inventory of self-protection tactics gleaned from secondary sources and personal experience as a humanitarian aid worker (an astonishing 21-page table divided into sections on local safety, local substance and local services).<sup>14</sup> Central to his argument and the bottom-up conceptualisation of protection is that livelihoods and services are ‘an inseparable part of protection because civilians often see them as central to their security, often take physical risks to obtain them, and often die in far greater numbers from the collapse of such elemental things than from direct physical violence’.<sup>15</sup> Other authors wrote case studies, providing descriptive accounts of civilian self-protection strategies in specific places during a specific time. For example, nearly all the articles republished in the September 2013 issue of *Stability*, a special collection entitled *Surviving Violence: The Politics of (Self) Protection*, highlight the self-protection tactics used by civilians during conflict.<sup>16</sup> This body of empirical evidence provides credibility for the concept of civilian self-protection and reveals how poorly self-protection tactics are incorporated into international responses to violence.<sup>17</sup> However, there is a considerable gap in the literature with regard to civilian self-protection during insurgencies or low-intensity violence involving religiously motivated extremist groups. The following case study of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique contributes to the literature on self-protection and introduces a fresh perspective on understanding community resilience to religiously-motivated violent extremism and how it can be strengthened.

## Case Study: Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

There are very few studies that cover the nature, characteristics, and causes of general violent conflict in Mozambique since the end of the civil war<sup>18</sup> and none regarding violent extremism. This section discusses the current conflict in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique and explains how civilian self-protection mechanisms have eroded over the past two decades, leaving the civilian population vulnerable.

Mozambique is no stranger to violent conflict. Almost immediately following independence, the former Portuguese colony descended into a horrific civil war that lasted more than 15 years. Violence against the civilian population featured heavily throughout the period and was perpetrated by both the governing Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) party and the rebel group Resistência Nacional (RENAMO).<sup>19</sup> The end of the civil war between the two sides introduced multi-party democracy and ushered in an era of hope and peace. The country was widely regarded as a 'beacon of hope', a rare African post-conflict success story, and as a model of post-conflict reconciliation and economic growth.<sup>20</sup> However, this perspective has since unravelled.

In 2013, violent skirmishes between government forces and RENAMO combatants erupted across the central part of the country. Both parties were quick to blame each other for the outbreak of violence. For many Mozambicans, the renewal of conflict brought back unwanted memories of its ugly past. However, the return to conflict was not entirely surprising. The motivations behind the violence are rooted in FRELIMO's control of the Mozambican state,<sup>21</sup> RENAMO's inability to transition from rebels to politicians,<sup>22</sup> and the rapid economic growth that has largely benefited Maputo's political elite. According to researcher Colin Darch, over the past two decades Mozambique has been defined by 'two contradictory discourses, one an idealised narrative of economic growth and the institutionalisation of democracy, the other a story of political, military and social tension',<sup>23</sup> which has resulted in violent protest, the return to low-level armed conflict, and, most recently, the rise of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado.

## The Emergence of Violent Extremism in Cabo Delgado

The latter part of 2017 saw an alarming upward trend in violence in Mozambique. Although the country had dealt with violent events over the past five years, most notably the renewal of hostilities between RENAMO and the

government, violent extremism as a product of religious radicalisation had never occurred. Mozambique's vulnerability to fundamentalism began in 2012 as its northern neighbour, Tanzania, started experiencing a growing number of militant Islamist attacks.<sup>24</sup> Tanzania's own vulnerability to violent extremism was the product of radicalised ideological spillover originating in Somalia and making its way down East Africa. In 2015, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which clusters countries according to their proximity and susceptibility to the emergence and spread of violence into 'epicentre', 'spillover' and 'at-risk' countries, designated Tanzania as 'at-risk' for violent extremism, whereas Somalia is designated an 'epicentre' country and Kenya as a 'spillover' state.<sup>25</sup> The establishment of an Islamist threat in Tanzania presented a challenge to Mozambique, particularly to its northern provinces. Although the northern region has a history of religious tolerance and moderate Islamic practices,<sup>26</sup> it has many of the same socio-economic and political characteristics that make regions susceptible to the growth and spread of violent extremism.<sup>27</sup>

Of the northern provinces, Cabo Delgado in particular has proven to be the most at risk, which is not surprising considering its proximity to Tanzania, its porous borders, the growth in illegal poaching, and the use of Pemba's ports as a means to transport illicit goods.<sup>28</sup> The province is sparsely populated and a relatively difficult area to govern in a country that has centralised all of its power in the southern capital city of Maputo. Furthermore, Cabo Delgado is a predominantly Muslim province that has lagged behind developmentally from the rest of the country. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), people living in the north (encompassing the provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and Niassa) are significantly less educated and less likely to have access to economic opportunities than people living in the southern provinces. The province has some of the highest rates of youth unemployment across the country, and citizens in Cabo Delgado are the most likely to live without essential services such as electricity, running water, access to hospitals and roads.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, in recent years Cabo Delgado has been a source of national optimism as some of the African continent's largest Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) reserves are being explored and prepared for future extraction. Several multinational companies have established a presence along the northern coast, from the provincial capital of Pemba to Palma near the border with Tanzania. These include the Texan company Anadarko, Dutch Shell, the Italian Eni, the Canadian Wentworth Resources Ltd and Exxon-Mobil, among others.<sup>30</sup> With the discovery and future extraction of LNG,

Mozambique is predicted to boom economically over the next decade.<sup>31</sup> However, on the ground, the situation has been less optimistic. Many in Cabo Delgado feel the economic boom brought about by LNG extraction will not positively impact local communities – sentiments that have been exacerbated by recent government corruption scandals that have left the country in a serious debt crisis.<sup>32</sup> For example, human rights groups have argued that Anadarko's construction of an LNG plant in Palma, which displaced several villages and resulted in local fishermen and farmers losing their ancestral way of living, took place without prior consultation. Moreover, local citizens have demonstrated several times in Pemba demanding jobs, which, they say, fossil fuel companies have given to non-locals.<sup>33</sup>

These social consequences of the extractive industry are not unique to Cabo Delgado's coastal communities. Villages and towns in the central part of the province have also been at risk. The United Kingdom (UK)-based Gemfields, which operates ruby mines throughout Cabo Delgado, has been accused of human rights abuses and of illegally confiscating land from local communities, particularly in the city of Montepuez where the majority of Gemfields' operations take place.<sup>34</sup> An investigative report in 2016 organised by the UK law firm Leigh Day found that over a three-year period 'locals were forced off their land, armed robberies and violence soared, and small-scale miners were beaten, shot and even buried alive'.<sup>35</sup> The most disturbing aspect of the report is the implication that the local government has been complicit in the abuses. Citizens, exploited by the extractive industry and the state, are left in a precarious position where the usual agencies for protection are unable and unwilling to protect them.

Cabo Delgado's poverty, an insecure and porous border, the presence of natural resources, coupled with increasing political instability throughout the country, increased its vulnerability to violent extremist and actors able to instrumentalise local grievances for their own ideological causes. On 5 October 2017 Islamist militants attacked three police stations in Mocimboa da Praia, a district in Cabo Delgado, catching international security analysts by surprise. The province does not have a recent history of violence, let alone violence related to violent extremism. In fact, from 1997 to September of 2017, there were a total of eight violent incidents in the province, seven of which were committed by the police.<sup>36</sup> However, the province's Islamic council had for several years been warning authorities of the existence of the group responsible for the attack and the threat their violent ideology posed to peace. In the months that followed, Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (loosely translated as 'adepts of the prophetic tradition'), known

locally as 'Al-Shabaab' (the organisation is not part of the Somali-based Al-Shabaab and potential links are, at this stage, speculative), began to attack both state security institutions and civilian populations along the coast, from Mocimboa da Praia to the Palma, Nangade and Macomia districts. Since the initial October 2017 attacks, there have been an estimated 170 civilian deaths and several clashes with local security forces. Most recently, at the time of writing on 1 February 2019, Islamist militants attacked Piqueue village in Mocimboa da Praia, beheaded seven villagers and kidnapped four women.<sup>37</sup>

To date, the majority of attacks have occurred on coastal communities that are proximate to LNG companies, affecting US and other international citizens working in the region.<sup>38</sup> The suspected Islamist militants have demonstrated a level of coordination and planning that has caught local and national authorities off guard. The director of Mozambique's National Intervention Police Unit was targeted and killed in December 2017; the police column was ambushed on its way to re-supply the police unit at Mitumbate, one of the villages in Mocimboa da Praia that has come under attack. According to reports, the militants blocked the road and when the police left their vehicles to remove obstacles the attackers opened fire. This clash occurred three days after the general commander of the police, Bernardino Rafael, announced amnesty to any Islamist who surrendered peacefully to the police.<sup>39</sup> Worryingly, the growing Islamist threat in Cabo Delgado is attracting Mozambicans from other parts of the country. On 9 January 2018, police in Cabo Delgado arrested 24 men suspected of coming from Nampula province to help reinforce the Islamist militants in Mocimboa da Praia.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, it seems the organisation is either drawing international recruits or, at least, has the support of Islamist organisations from countries in the region; by mid-March 2018 the Mozambican police reported that they had arrested 470 individuals and prosecuted 370 in connection with the Islamist attacks, of whom 314 were Mozambican, 52 Tanzanian, one Somali, and three Ugandan.<sup>41</sup>

The attacks have not stopped, despite an increase in police activity, national and international attention, and the closing down of mosques and the arrests of suspected militants. Although government action has been swift, it has been relatively quiet about making public statements discussing the recent events or acknowledging them altogether. Initially, there was hesitation from the government to directly link the attacks to Islamist fundamentalists. However, pressure from journalists and civil society forced the government to address the situation, finally leading to an admission



of a potential Islamist threat.<sup>42</sup> Despite the hesitancy towards addressing the armed group as Islamists, or related to Islam, the government's tactics against Muslims in the region have been concerning. Young Muslim men have been targeted in Nampula and Cabo Delgado, and the government has destroyed<sup>43</sup> or forced the closure of any mosque suspected of sympathising with the militants.<sup>44</sup> The government's response to the continued attacks is being closely monitored. There is a fear that the government's heavy-handed tactics will lead to an escalation of violence, abductions and terrorism directed at foreign entities, police, the government, and the civilian population.<sup>45</sup>

The civilian population has been the target of much of the violence. Although the Mozambique case cannot be said to constitute an all-out armed conflict, both the government and the Islamist militants have directly targeted civilians and civil society activists, stoking fear and causing insecurity. The Mozambican government and Islamist militants are both also responsible for storming into villages, shooting civilians, abusing residents, unlawfully detaining youth, and killing women and children.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, since January 2019, state security forces have increasingly intimidated, detained and prosecuted journalists covering the fighting. The government has barred various media organisations and correspondents from visiting the province, leading Dewa Mavinga, the southern Africa director at Human Rights Watch, to argue that the 'Mozambican government's actions to silence the media in Cabo Delgado obstruct public scrutiny of the military operations and alleged abuses'.<sup>47</sup> Residents of Cabo Delgado already faced a comparatively high number of stressors before this new armed conflict erupted. Now, civilians are in a dangerous position where protection mechanisms are minimal at best.

## Protecting the Civilian Population

During times of armed conflict and increases in violence, civilians are forced to take action themselves to ensure their physical wellbeing. Civil society plays an important role in protecting civilians through non-violent means such as negotiation or advocacy.<sup>48</sup> In Mozambique, however, civil society space has been eroded, leaving the population with very few options to protect their civil and human rights from both state and non-state abuses.

Civil societies in conflict areas, or within authoritarian regimes, are often shaped by the context in which they operate.<sup>49</sup> These include political structures, historical narratives, cultural and traditional values, and experiences of violence. Mozambique's relationship with civil society is a relatively new

concept. After independence from Portugal in 1975, the Mozambique government, led by FRELIMO, controlled most aspects of the civil society space. Aside from state-controlled civil society, any organisation or association that represented a threat to FRELIMO was forbidden to operate. After the enactment of the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, in which a multiparty democracy was adopted, civil society had its first meaningful chance to flourish across the country. For the next 10 years, civil society organisations proliferated across much of Mozambique. However, by 2004, nascent independent civil society eroded as FRELIMO reinforced its political supremacy by systematically expanding its representation within the state apparatus and at all geographic levels.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, FRELIMO generated a greater intolerance towards any opposition to its one-party rule.

The government strengthened its grip on civil society in the mid-2000s, making it increasingly difficult to operate in areas outside of health, education, and infrastructure. According to Tanja Kleibl and Ronaldo Munck,<sup>51</sup> the consolidation of FRELIMO dominance over the entire Mozambican state, and its reach into society through the co-option of traditional leaders and civil society institutions, has been a critical factor that has left citizens (locally) without an open political space and voice. In interviews with citizens in northern Mozambique, Kleibl and Munck found an environment devoid of an independent and free civil society, which has led to fear and social discontent in addition to the historically hostile political environment produced during and after 16 years of brutal civil war.<sup>52</sup> Organisations surveyed in a recent assessment of Mozambique's civil society stated that advocacy work is challenging because the government constantly monitors organisational activities and their leaders, who have difficulty raising a critical voice condemning the abuse of power and rampant corruption.<sup>53</sup> If civil society activists challenge injustices perpetrated by the state, or even multi-national corporations operating in the extractive or agricultural space, they are often labelled as opposition sympathisers and coerced to change their position or remain quiet. There is a feeling that FRELIMO will 'cut your legs' economically, politically, and socially.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, over the past two decades a number of high-profile opposition leaders and civil society members who challenged the status quo have been assassinated. Mahamudo Amurane, the mayor of Mozambique's third largest city, Nampula, was gunned down outside his home in October 2017. Amurane represented the third-largest political party, Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM), and supporters believe he was killed for his strong stance against government corruption.<sup>55</sup> On

22 September 2016, in the province of Tete, RENAMO politician Armindo António Nkutche was shot dead while returning home from a provincial assembly.<sup>56</sup> In 2015, constitutional lawyer and advocate for decentralisation Gilles Cistac was killed in Maputo, sending shock waves across southern Africa.<sup>57</sup> His assassination was linked to his opinions on decentralisation and his constitutional interpretation of whether Mozambique should remain a unitary state.<sup>58</sup>

Journalists and media members have also been the target of assaults, kidnappings, and assassinations. Most famously, Carlos Cardoso, an investigative journalist in Maputo, was assassinated in 2000. Fifteen years later, Paulo Machava, another well-known investigative reporter, was shot dead while jogging in Maputo. Economist António Siba-Siba Macuácuá was killed in Maputo in 2003 for tackling corruption and exposing fraudulent deals while working for the largest commercial bank in the country.<sup>59</sup>

Without an independent civil society to advocate and protect them from state and non-state threats, Mozambicans in the northern part of the country have turned to religious institutions to fill that void. This applies to varied faiths, with, for example, the Catholic organisation *Comunita di Sant' Egidio* having helped broker national peace in Mozambique with a General Peace Agreement signed in Rome on 4 October 1992. Mozambicans see the role of religious associations as related to the construction of harmony and peace as well as conducting prayers and providing education.<sup>60</sup> According to an Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2015, residents in Cabo Delgado trusted their local religious institutions more than the police, army, local MPs, and even traditional leaders. Almost 50% of respondents in Cabo Delgado said they were active members of religious groups, compared to just 21% who were members of a voluntary association or community group.<sup>61</sup>

The pull of religious associations for young Mozambicans needing a place to air grievances, to discuss political and social issues, and to find a community, has the potential to make many of them the targets of both Islamists and the government. Islamist militants could potentially use the government's heavy-handed responses and the socio-economic situation to identify future recruits. Previous research suggests that counterterrorism policies and practices may create a well of sympathy and silence among sections of society, especially if these policies increase repression, or stigmatise and alienate these groups.<sup>62</sup> The increased presence of police and security forces searching for Islamists has led to the unlawful and wrongful detention of locals and foreigners. The government's forceful retaliation against Islamist militants and sympathisers in Cabo Delgado has left young

Muslim men afraid that they will be the target of government oppression and abuse. Stories, true or false, spread rapidly in Mozambique and are often used to stoke fear among the population. For example, in November 2017, Islamist militants created propaganda out of rumours that local authorities were forcibly gathering young Muslim men and shooting them outside the forests of Ribáuè in neighbouring Nampula.

In conclusion, the severe limitations placed on an independent civil society have significantly reduced civilians' capacity to protect themselves against violent extremists (and the government's retaliation to extremism) in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. Efforts must be made to strengthen civil society to act as a watchdog, not only against government abuse, but also to assess and monitor local violent extremist threats.

### **Recommendations: Strengthening Civilian Self-Protection**

The Cabo Delgado case study shows how the erosion of civil society has reduced civilians' capacity to protect themselves not only from extremist ideology, but also from the government's heavy-handed response. Therefore, strengthening civil society might empower local communities in Cabo Delgado to protect themselves and to prevent violent extremism from embedding itself. Two concepts are useful in understanding how to strengthen civilian self-protection: community-based protection and preparedness support.

Community-based protection is an approach taken by traditional protection actors (usually international non-governmental organisations) that gives those at risk a central role in defining threats, developing solutions and implementing activities related to protection. Supporting local communities to protect themselves is an integral part of the community-based approach to protection, which is espoused by many humanitarian organisations and even the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS).<sup>63</sup>

The approach works in consultation with communities and builds upon the existing knowledge, skills and capacity of civilians to deliver protection. Taking stock of existing self-protection mechanisms is important so that, at the very least, humanitarians or peacekeepers do not undermine them, further endangering the communities they are trying to protect. As part of its community-based protection programming in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Oxfam has since 2006 created community protection

structures (CPSs) in 38 communities in North and South Kivu. CPSs 'are designed to identify the main threats faced by communities and find the best way of addressing them, while engaging with local authorities'.<sup>64</sup> Community representatives come together to discuss threats and develop action plans to respond to them. To mitigate threats, Oxfam provides training in negotiation so that civilians may directly engage with local authorities or armed actors about their own protection.<sup>65</sup> An evaluation of the CPSs showed that they were able to increase community awareness of their rights and, 'coupled with capacity building on protection, gender and social accountability', led to 'improved community members' confidence and empowerment levels, while making them less vulnerable to abuse'.<sup>66</sup>

As a concept, community-based protection met with widespread approval. In practice, it has been contested. A survey about community-based protection prepared for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) annual consultations in 2014 found that 'truly locally led protection efforts are rarely acknowledged or supported by outside agencies'.<sup>67</sup> Instead, traditional protection actors often monopolise the authorship and ownership of community-based protection activities, merely paying lip service to the idea of meaningful engagement and building capacity. This is partially because implementing community-based protection is genuinely challenging; it is time consuming and resource intensive. Overcoming formal systems and engrained approaches to protection entails changing organisational behaviour, which is difficult. At the same time, it is optimistic to believe that traditional protection actors would sincerely cede power, control and money to civilians for protection-related activities. But despite its shortcomings, the community-based approach to protection holds the promise of strengthening communities' abilities to protect themselves.

Supporting local communities to protect themselves is also an integral part of preparedness support, whereby traditional protection actors prepare local counterparts (national non-governmental organisations or national civil society groups) and local communities to survive on their own. In contrast to community-based protection, preparedness support has largely been the result of a 'south-to-south' transfer of knowledge.<sup>68</sup> And while community-based protection programmes can be relatively expensive, preparedness support relies more on micro-grants to conduct activities such as teaching families to arrange asset-protection plans, helping communities prepare risk-reduction plans or assisting local groups to employ youth in public-services plans as an alternative to recruitment into armed groups.<sup>69</sup>

One example is the Syria Civil Defence *Community Preparedness Guide for Emergencies*, which gives instructions on how to prepare for airstrikes, create early warning systems and self-protection during heavy artillery attacks and small-arms fire.<sup>70</sup> The Center for Civilians in Harm's Way that offers preparedness support to aid agencies, developed a paper on preparedness and recruitment into violence and extremism to help bolster local vigilance and help local actors refute, reduce and replace drivers of recruitment.<sup>71</sup>

It is important to caution that civilian self-protection has its limits and that civilians cannot be expected to provide adequate protection from certain types of violence such as organised campaigns of state-sponsored violence. Self-protection must be seen as one element of the global-protection architecture that includes international humanitarian and human rights laws, UN Security Resolutions on the protection of civilians, humanitarian efforts, and peacekeeping missions.

## Conclusion

In Mozambique, the greatest challenge to strengthening civil society – and thereby strengthening civilian self-protection – will be operating in the context of state resistance, state repression and state-sponsored violence. Governments, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and corporations should pressure the Mozambican government to be transparent about Islamist attacks in Cabo Delgado; to significantly increase the space available for NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) to conduct more developmental work in Cabo Delgado, thereby mitigating some of the vulnerabilities to extremism; and to develop a framework to build up civil society in the country before self-protection mechanisms are further eroded. Governments with development funds for Mozambique should increase the percentage allotted to civil society development, which will not only help in mitigating the spread of violent extremism but also protect other important strides made in development and democratisation in Mozambique since the end of its civil war.

NGOs and CBOs working in Cabo Delgado should set up civil society forums and networks to promote communication, collaboration and learning. They should sponsor regular meetings for civil society forums to discuss protection-related issues and develop locally led solutions. It will be important for LNG companies to attend forum meetings, and NGOs and CBOs can use their platforms to pressure LNG companies to attend and to shame those that do not. A clear and inclusive policy is urgently needed

to address community grievances, including land-resettlement issues for fishing communities forced inland by the LNG companies.<sup>72</sup> The policy could also articulate how corporations in Mozambique need to strengthen civil society as part of their mandated corporate social responsibility plans. The civil society forums could also conduct regular dialogue with religious institutions in Cabo Delgado. They could work together with religious institutions to promote tolerance and pluralism, while steering people away from those preaching a more radical or violent interpretation of the faith.

## Endnotes

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