

# AGIR

STRENGTHENING  
MOZAMBICAN CIVIL SOCIETY  
2010-2014

OXFAM NOVIB CASE JUNE 2015



**OXFAM**  
Novib

# SUMMARY

## HELPING CITIZENS TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD IN MOZAMBIQUE

In Mozambique, as in many other countries, civil society organisations could be more effective in standing up for citizens. The government tends to see the role of civil society as providing services, rather than holding government to account. Donors also hinder the effectiveness of civil society organisations by imposing a confusing range of requirements.

The AGIR programme involved donors working together to harmonise their support and build the capacity of civil society organisations to represent the interests of citizens and engage constructively with the authorities.

# CASE DESCRIPTION

## AIM OF THE PROJECT

The AGIR programme, which ran from 2010 to 2014, supported Mozambican civil society organisations to improve citizen participation, accountability, transparency, access to information, respect for human rights and gender equality in government action.

Oxfam Novib has a long history of working in Mozambique with civil society. Since 1988, we have been actively supporting and working with a variety of organisations and groups, resulting in extensive knowledge and expertise on the development of civil society in Mozambique. As a result of our long-term presence and appreciated support, we can rely on numerous strong relationships within Mozambican civil society. Along with the knowledge and long-term capacity building experience we have built, these relationships strengthen our work on the development of civil society.

For SA (Open Society) the project period was August 1, 2013 to December 31, 2014 and for CIP (Centre for Public Integrity) it was July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2014. Please note that these two partners are examples. The total AGIR programme covers many more partner organisations.

## CONTEXT

The role of and space for civil society in Mozambique is heavily influenced by the changing political and economic context, which is sometimes contradictory and tense. Mozambique has had a relatively long democratisation process. Liberalisation started in the late 1980s with the opening up of the single party regime, public discussion and enactment of a new democratic constitution, and the approval of new press and association laws. However, the country has lately experienced a notable deterioration in its governance indicators, such as freedom of the press, access to information, participation and accountability.

The natural resource boom in the country has been hailed as an opportunity to continue high economic growth rates, averaging 7% in the last 10 years, and development. But it

has also triggered human rights violations, mainly linked to resettlement processes: violation of land tenure rights, non-restoration of livelihoods, improper compensation, and even violent police repression in response to community protests and claims. In response, this has led to strong social activism.

While the law on the right to information took nine years in parliament to be approved, there have been improvements in access to budget information – the government publishes the budget on its website, and a citizen’s budget is produced and published. More recently, the government published its contracts with extractive industries. These are substantial changes resulting from civil society advocacy. Nonetheless, the culture of public accountability in Mozambique is still emerging.

It is only in recent years that civil society has taken a role as a critical voice active in the promotion of more responsible and accountable governance. Early in the post-emergency period following the civil war, which ended in 1992, and the approval of the law on associations in 1991 (law 8/91), the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) was mainly as service providers, combined with building capacities and awareness of local communities. In recent years the activist profile has been broadened from a few actors to a wider spectrum of civil society.

This has had implications for the pattern of relations between government and CSOs. When CSOs focused on service delivery and capacity development of local communities, their relationship with duty-bearers was based on a model of partnership. However, when civil society began to present evidence on the level of implementation of government plans, to buttress its claims for better allocation of public resources, its relationship with government came to be seen as conflictive. The response of the duty-bearers to the increased focus of CSOs as a voice bearer has been to limit the space for activism.

## **RATIONALE - WHY DID OXFAM NOVIB GET INVOLVED?**

Oxfam Novib has a long history of working with and supporting civil society in Mozambique. In 1988, we started to support local civil society in three northern provinces, creating strong relationships with local groups and organisations and building extensive knowledge on the context of civil society in the country. We focused on harmonising our activities with those of other donors, as lack of donor harmonisation undermines the effectiveness of support to CSOs, and creating a nurturing environment for organisational development and impact. An example of success has been our assistance for Mozambican organisation Human Rights League (LDH) – supporting the establishment of partnerships, building networks, and sharing best practices, knowledge and experience, in an increasingly complex context for such work in the country.

The main recent example of Oxfam’s work to develop civil society in Mozambique is our participation in the AGIR programme (2010-2014), funded by Swedish donor organisation Sida and focused on establishing a nurturing environment. Oxfam Novib’s activities in Mozambique were a direct inspiration for Sida in the creation of the AGIR programme. Oxfam Novib participates as an intermediary organisation, supporting CSOs at the national and provincial level together with Diakonia, IBIS and We Effect.

AGIR breaks away from the non-conducive donor environment by providing long-term core funding, stimulating donors to fund the strategic plans of supported CSOs and adapting its management instruments to those the CSOs are used to. The programme facilitates civil society actors to improve their internal governance and results orientation

and aims to enhance their capacity to cooperate, share knowledge and develop coalitions and networks.

Through the AGIR programme, Oxfam Novib worked at national and provincial level on financial accountability, participation and social and legal accountability, and the underlying causes of discrimination. Our goal with AGIR is to contribute to enabling active citizens and a strong, vibrant civil society to participate in and influence the democratic process, in turn making governance more accountable, and deepening democracy, gender equity and human rights in Mozambique.

## THE INTERVENTION

The core work of the AGIR intermediaries is the establishment of “key actor” agreements with local CSO partners active in the specific theme covered by each intermediary. The objective of these AGIR intermediary-CSO partnerships is to support the strengthening of civil society through long-term core funding and capacity strengthening in line with each CSO’s own strategic plan and following the principles of ‘good donorship’.

Oxfam Novib selected CSOs to support with their strategic agendas and plans and their internal capacity building challenges. We supported them as a partner, and as a civic actor pursuing the same causes, much more than as a donor. The approach to capacity building was tailor-made to the unique dynamics of each key actor. On engagement with each key actor, a participatory assessment of internal capacity building issues was conducted and priorities identified, either as opportunities or risks. Next to building the capacity of organisations, the programme aimed to support and facilitate linkages with other actors; alliance building initiatives; learning, documentation and sharing of experiences; joint interventions and improved synergies for action.

In working with the organisations on partnerships and capacity building, we facilitated for example exchange visits between partners, and hiring consultants and staff. We made sure we would not dictate to partners on necessary activities, or lecture them on how to build their capacities. It was a mutual process in which we worked closely with the partner to identify the possibilities for their development and monitor progress. This process of working as equals has been highly appreciated by the organisations we have worked with, as evidenced for example by partner satisfaction surveys. Mentoring relationships with the weaker partner organisations were very close, with almost monthly visits and weekly phone calls.

The engagement process was guided by a series of open and respectful dialogues in which the key actor and the programme team together list the principal opportunities for cooperation – results or impact areas where there is overlap – and the main risks, internal or external, that may prevent success in achieving results and impact. The engagement process was explicitly mutual, with the exchange of strategic agendas and visions on accountability issues, guided by the Oxfam Novib Toolbox. The management of the relevant opportunities and risks was subject to a dialogue and revisited and, if necessary, adjusted on regular basis. Oxfam Novib conducted close monitoring of partner progress and the development of the existing risks, for which partners had to design a risk management plan.

## ACTIVITIES

Oxfam Novib's activities within the AGIR programme were focused on:

- Engagement in partnership contracts with key and emerging or innovative civil society actors;
- Provision of long term core funding to the partners, based on the partners' strategic plan and budgets;
- Assistance for partners with resources for analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, and capacity building plans;
- Support for partners to increase capacity and strengthen their systems;
- Promotion of a broad set of capacity building methods, e.g. exchange visits, internships, seminars, workshops;
- Joint interventions, annual reflection and training courses with the other intermediaries;
- Support for and facilitation of linkages with other actors;
- Support for and facilitation of alliance building initiatives amongst actors;
- Support for and facilitation of learning, documentation and sharing of experiences;
- Provision of a pool of flexible and dynamic partner support resources;
- Fostering and stimulation of an open, trustful and mutually supportive environment among all key actors;
- Stimulation of stronger civil society actors to be available as mentors for weaker organisations;
- Refinement of proposed results frameworks by actors with indicators and targets;
- Promotion of the sharing of information through the use of websites;
- Guarantee that good practices and methodologies and useful manuals are shared;
- Promotion and facilitation of joint interventions, position papers and improved synergies for action;
- Overall intensive accompaniment of partners.

## RESULTS

### MAIN OUTPUTS RELATED TO INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERS

- All AGIR partners show ownership of their strategic plan and use the strategic pillars as a starting point for their actions in a more consistent way;
- Partners regularly conduct general assemblies and other statutory meetings with their governing bodies; as a result, these bodies show increasing responsiveness to – and willingness to defend – the interests of the organisation and its members;
- Partners' internal management is professionalised through improvements in administrative and finance systems, as evidenced by external audit reports;
- Partners show increased capacity to include cross cutting issues in their programmes and drew up gender and HIV/AIDS policies to increase employees security;
- Partners increased networking, coalition building and exchange of experiences resulting in enhancement of public mobilisation and number and quality of campaigns and civil society position papers;
- Enhanced connections and improved communication using ICT for advocacy between AGIR partners and other key actors at different levels (international, national, regional, provincial, district/local).

## OVERALL RESULTS OF THE STRENGTHENING OF CIVIL SOCIETY WORK BY OXFAM NOVIB

- Strengthened NGOs: through the AGIR programme, 55 CSOs received support over the last 4.5 years, of which 20 were supported by Oxfam Novib, including key strategic partners and emerging actors. AGIR contributed significantly to improving the functioning of civil society in Mozambique.
- Our support through the AGIR programme assisted CSOs to operate on the basis of a strong organisational strategic plan; to implement effectively their internal systems and control mechanisms; to have operational systems and procedures that reduce financial risks; and to create and implement institutional gender and HIV policies.
- Through our core support, organisations were able to implement long term strategic plans without having to follow donor priorities.
- Improved coordination between CSOs: we assisted in linking strategic national partners with provincial civil society. This enhanced information flow and the legitimacy of civil society positioning.
- Our support strongly improved CSO engagement, individually and in coalitions, with government officials, and improved their advocacy and lobby capacity.
- Donor coordination and lobbying resulted in changes of donor attitudes (“good donorship”), using a more common approach in contracting, monitoring and reporting of their relationships with Mozambican civil society.
- Five basket funds were created for partner organisations, of which four are still functional; we terminated our partnership with MONASO in 2012 due to misuse of funds from the basket fund.
- Transparency and accountability mechanisms were installed and improved at different levels: between AGIR and partners, and between partners and communities and beneficiaries.

## EXAMPLES OF RESULTS (AGIR OUTCOMES) OF THE WORK OF SUPPORTED AGIR PARTNER CSOS PER THEMATIC AREA

### **Behaviour change of rights holders as a result of improved knowledge and awareness**

- Increase in reporting of human rights abuse cases, particularly those of gender based violence, and increased demand and solidarity of rights holders for support to victims;
- Expanded freedom of expression, as a fundamental right of citizens, through community radio, national radio and television programmes which openly show critical opinions on citizens’ low level of wellbeing;
- Citizens are less afraid to participate in peaceful protests against violation of their rights and to ask governors, legislators, defence and security forces and multinationals to increase the quality of service delivery to citizens.

### **Behaviour change of citizens and their organisations due to increased networking for advocacy and democratic accountability initiatives**

- More effective monitoring of PARP (the national Action Programme for Poverty Reduction) and PES or PESOD (Provincial and District Social and Economic Plans) through training of CSOs and community observers and joint reporting and networking, carried out by national and local organisations that conduct research to gather evidence about the level of implementation of government plans and budget execution;

- Rights holders increasingly report on poor delivery of essential public services and low-level corruption cases by using telephone, Facebook or public gatherings of community platforms.

## IMPACT OF AGIR

The design and implementation of AGIR, a long-term programme involving many partners and coordination with other intermediary organisations, has created great impact in increasing citizenship and participation in national governance. In addition to greater availability of financial resources, AGIR created a more comfortable environment to learn and concentrate on programme development and implementation, and lessened the need to spend time on responding to calls for proposals.

AGIR enabled a strategic role for CSOs in advocating for rights, rule of law, accountability and transparency. It strengthened their role in collectively claiming rights and demanding accountability of duty bearers. Partners have been able to raise evidence-based claims, combining the efforts of the more research-oriented and the more activist-oriented partners. Partners were supported to continue networking with other CSOs to quickly respond to emerging issues through the combination of core funding and flexible funds for campaigns and similar advocacy activities.

Dialogue with duty bearers increased and they were willing to discuss with CSOs the development of proposals and policies. Nonetheless, relationships with government sometimes became tense when CSOs presented evidence on the level of implementation of government plans, to buttress its claims for better allocation of public resources. Our support to partners enabled them to build alliances within civil society, spreading the risk of “attacks” on individual CSOs when dealing with duty bearers on sensitive issues.

### DETAILED EXAMPLES OF OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES: SOCIEDADE ABERTA (SA) AND CENTRO DE INTEGRIDADE PÚBLICA (CIP)

#### SA (SOCIEDADE ABERTA – OPEN SOCIETY)

Under the AGIR subcomponent of participation, social accountability and monitoring of respect for human rights, Open Society began in 2013 an intervention in eight districts of Maputo province. This intervention forms part of the efforts made by this organisation to improve the participation of civil society in public areas of planning, monitoring of governance and access to information for citizens.

The inclusion of the Open Society in the AGIR programme provided impetus for launching innovative initiatives and consolidating previously established ones:

- The creation of a provincial network that monitors burning issues on local governance and the provision of public services;
- The mobilisation of district civil society platforms in Maputo province;
- The establishment of complaints boxes in various districts and municipalities;
- The holding of debates and facilitation of civil society positioning proceedings before government action.

These initiatives effectively contributed to the objectives set out in the AGIR programme.

## OVERALL RESULTS

- Civil society in Maputo province has been strengthened through capacity building and improved coordination – it has more space to dialogue directly with provincial and district government representatives;
- District platforms are better equipped and informed and more able to network, resulting in a stronger voice and better prepared interventions with the government;
- An analysis of the 2014 Namaacha district PES shows that the demands formulated, publicly presented and advocated for by community platforms during 2013 were better included in the new district plan than in previous years.

Currently, thanks to the efforts of Open Society and its partners, civil society is more organised and capable, has more space to interact with local and provincial government, uses governance monitoring tools and has a greater awareness of the rights and duties that the system of governance in Mozambique confers. District civil society platforms in Maputo province have consolidated and networked to monitor development policies and annual plans of intervention in the social sectors.

### **Signs of improvement in public services**

The government now responds to reports of suggestions and complaints compiled by district civil society platforms. While in itself this does guarantee that corrective action will be taken, the fact that there is a reaction from the government is an important gain on accountability. In 2013, for example, the District Services of Education, Youth and Technology of Namaacha did not agree to a request from civil society to open a new secondary school in the Mahelane zone, but did justify itself, indicating that the number of students would not justify the high costs of allocating teachers.

### **Government awareness of the role of civil society in governance action**

The attitude of the government is fundamental to civil society having space to operate in the arena of governance, even if their right to participation is incorporated in law. Actions to strengthen civil society and empower them in the tools of participation are causing a visible impact on the government's attitude towards civil society, and its recognition of their collaborating and legitimising role. This can be seen in statements by the current Permanent Secretary of Namaacha district and the former governor of Maputo province.

### **Citizen awareness of their role in governance action**

Training and capacity building on rights allows citizens to take a more active role in making demands and influencing governance action. The capacity to influence is no longer seen as a government concession, but as a right and indeed responsibility of citizenship.

## CIP (CENTRO DE INTEGRIDADE PÚBLICA – CENTRE FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY)

The Mozambican civil society organisation CIP is a longstanding Oxfam Novib partner, which was one of the AGIR programme's first four partners in 2010. CIP is seen as one of Mozambique's strongest and best equipped CSOs in terms of human resources. It conducts research and publicly presents the results for discussion. Since 2008 CIP has started an ambitious programme on budget tracking ("rasteio da despesa pública") implemented at district level in which locally trained teams annually verify to what degree the planned expenses of governmental funds such as those for district investment, support to schools or roads are being spent in reality.

The final outcomes – including pictures that show the quality of the constructed buildings, roads or bridges – are compiled from district to national level, published and discussed publicly with community members and government representatives. During the sessions, members of the involved CSOs request explanations from the government about under-spending and the low quality of construction. Due to the AGIR programme's support, this initiative grew rapidly and now involves four provincial Oxfam/AGIR partners.

CIP staff members conducted the first 12 district budget tracking exercises in 2008. The results were well received by other CSOs operating at provincial and district level, and soon several local CSOs such as AGIR partners Facilidade and Estamos started showing an interest to be trained by CIP to conduct budget tracking exercises in the districts where they operate. AGIR funding made this possible.

In 2014, five CSOs (of which four are AGIR partners) conducted in total 25 budget tracking exercises. In April 2015 the Coalition for Transparency and Public Integrity was launched, including four AGIR partners from Maputo, Niassa, Gaza, Manica and Nampula provinces. The coalition members will track the public budget and conduct social audits on education, health, water and sanitation and natural resources.

Presentations of the budget tracking reports receive increased attention each year, and government representatives increasingly participate and respond.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The importance of having a strong track record in a country. Oxfam Novib's long-term experience was a helpful basis for our participation in the AGIR programme and our capacity to step up on donor harmonisation.
- While partner organisations express satisfaction at the way Oxfam Novib treats them as equals and works with them towards their development, in a way this also diminishes our visibility, as partner organisations often tend to forget to mention our support in their own activities and reports.
- Working to create networks of CSOs pays off. The activities of organisations are strengthened and their voice is increased as their efforts more coordinated. In the next phase of AGIR, there will be an even stronger focus on creating networks.
- When based on evidence not perceptions, and coordinated among networks, advocacy has strong potential to spark dialogue that causes change.
- The governing bodies of CSOs need to provide more active supervision of how organisations are run, to reduce internal operational risks.

## READ ON / HUMAN INTEREST



“Complaints and suggestions” box in Namaacha



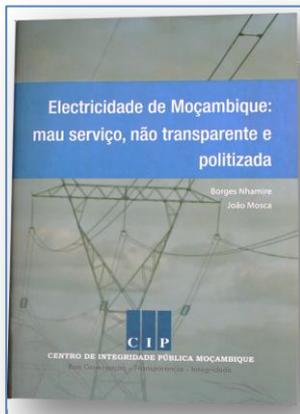
Seminar on the importance of implementation of laws for the consolidation of relations between the state and the citizen - Matola, 2013



Report of budget tracking exercise conducted by AGIR partner Estamos and supported by



Report of budget tracking exercise conducted by AGIR partner Facilidade and supported by AGIR partner CIP



Good practices, innovative experiences and alternatives developed by people that promote gender equality in public services like education, health and water

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