



Photo: Mario Macilau/ Oxfam Novib

# NURTURING CIVIL SOCIETY IN MOZAMBIQUE

In the last decade, Mozambique lacked an effective Civil Society Organization (CSO) network to facilitate national and regional links between CSOs. This meant that in governance, and particularly in advocacy, CSOs were not able to use strong, joint voices to engage duty-bearers.

The situation worsened when LINK, a CSO network, collapsed due to internal organizational conflicts and mismanagement. When LINK collapsed, almost all relevant national actors (both governmental and non-governmental), lost credibility within the CSO network.

A new network, called JOINT, then emerged – but without secure support of any kind. While most donors had lost their trust in these kinds of networks, Oxfam Novib committed itself to supporting JOINT. The results of this support are significant: JOINT has become a strong CSO network, both at national and regional levels.

## BRINGING CSOs TOGETHER

Mozambique's level of democracy is still fragile. This means limitation of freedom to speech, limited access to information which is worsened by low illiteracy rates, co-optation of civil society activists, corruption and unfair allocation of resources, among other traits are common in the country. Additionally, citizens' political socio-economic and political participation is very low.

In terms of power relations most of the decisions are taken by the government without effective contribution from other development actors. Furthermore, checks and balance has not been functional has the main decisions including passing of laws by the duty bearers is firstly decided at the ruling party (FRELIMO) level. The work of Civil Society Organisations and networks is therefore important to level the power balance in the country.

Oxfam had found out that although there were some organisations, both consolidated and emerging ones, they were still working in silos in the sense that there were competing one another without collaboration and solidarity. Duty bearers used this lack of commonality between CSOs agendas to forget their contributions to governance issues.

Oxfam is convinced that if CSOs are strong and work in networks, they can more effectively do their advocacy and influence main decision making processes in the country. Oxfam concluded that a coordinating body for CSOs was missing and involvement of (poorest and most vulnerable) citizens through their organisations and constituencies in combating injustice and in poverty alleviation initiatives was difficult.

With this specific project, Oxfam aimed at ensuring that active citizens and a strong and vibrant civil society influence and participate in democratic processes; contribute to more responsive governance, deepened democracy, gender equity and human rights in Mozambique. Oxfam's added value is that it gives core-funding to this CSOs network and thus the network can mobilize both CSOs and citizens to participate in development processes that will lead to poverty alleviation.

## THE PROJECT: JOINING FORCES

To address the problem identified above, Oxfam partnered with JOINT since 2011 and renovated the contract for the period 2013 to 2014 and then for 2015. The approaches to support this partner are threefold:

- 1) Institutional support ;
- 2) facilitation of networks; and
- 3) promotion of good donorship (common funds and donor groups).

In turn, JOINT carried out the following interventions, among others;

Establishment of a database of CSOs;

- Institutionalisation of CSOs National Annual Conferences (since 2013);
- Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice (2013) for Monitoring of Domestication and Implementation of Internal Protocols of Human Rights in Mozambique;
- Facilitation of CSOs movements (2013-2014) for the passing of the recently approved law on access to information and freedom of speech;

- Organisation of national campaigns (2014) against the law for additional perks to MPs and ex-presidents;
- Organisation of campaigns to defend the rights of human rights defenders in Mozambique
- Organisation of CSOs in Mozambique or campaigning against the hidden debts and other political and socioeconomic situation in Mozambique
- Hosting of regional campaigns (2014) under “The SADC we want”.

The partnership is based on financial support (through core-funding) for institutional and programme development; capacity building in several areas such as project management, resource mobilisation, strategic and operational planning, mainstreaming of crosscutting (gender, HIV and AIDS, environment and change and human rights based approach), lobby and advocacy, building of strategic networks.

## RESULTS

With the support, Joint achieved the following results:

1. Contributed to the approval of relevant legislation (Penal Code) with contributions from CSOs;
2. Government is now open to receive contributions (through shadow reports) to improve the country report on human rights, as per the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and UDHR;
3. The voice of CSOs is now stronger and more vibrant and unique than before;
4. CSOs have increased their reputation both at national and international levels. The testimonial of this is the increased number of events to which they are invited to participate including delivery of speeches and multifaceted presents;
5. Improved level of coordination between centrally and locally based CSOs;
6. JOINT is now a key player in the economic, social and political decision making process.



A press conference addressed by Executive Directors from some of the strongest CSOs in Mozambique, during a preparation for a demonstration on the socioeconomic and political situation in Mozambique. The event was mobilized by JOINT and took place in September 2016, in Maputo. Photo courtesy of Simão Tila, JOINT Executive Coordinator.

## STORIES

Elvira Matsinhe, focal point for joint at Oxfam Novib said as follows when asked about her opinion about this partner

*“Almost a year and a half that I work as a focal point for JOINT, it is my duty to liaise with this organization within the partnership with Oxfam and to ensure the implementation of agreed plans and the development of their capabilities. During the time I have worked with JOINT I have witnessed its growth and the space that has won in the Mozambican Civil Society, being visible the improvement of their work to beneficiaries and the quality of their work to respond contract requirements with Oxfam”.*

Elvira added that:

*“One of the major challenges faced by the Mozambican NGOs before JOINT’s establishment was the limited coordination between CSOs, thus making their interventions difficult because there were cases of effort duplication and struggle*

*for protagonist, JOINT has contributed to the iniquity of the CSOs´ voice, supporting the strengthening of provincial and regional forums of NGOs. Furthermore, by conducting studies to support advocacy interventions, advocacy campaigns, shadow reports, marches against cases of violation of human rights and law, JOINT has contributed to the gaining of space for civil society in decision making processes in the country”.*

Additionally, José Ivo Correia, CEMO´s Chair of the Board said the following regarding JOINT:

*“Joint is a network that came to fill in the gap that we, as CSOs, had had in the country in terms of coordination of our work. The establishment of JOINT coordination between CSOs in several events and interventions has improved a lot. Apart from the annually CSOs National Conferences, JOINT has led the organization of several commemorative dates, such as 16 activism days and human rights day on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December”. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of organizing CSOs cluster/thematic e.g gender, governance, MEAL, climate change, HIV and AIDS, among others)”.*

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The main lessons learnt are two:

1. Risky decisions in partnering emerging SCOs may lead to fruitful results if well implemented and monitored;
2. The more SCOs have one voice, the more effective advocacy work is.

## **READ ON**

For further information such as articles, pictures, videos, reports and presentations by JOINT please go to [www.joint.org.mz](http://www.joint.org.mz) and/or to the organisational facebook page “JOINT- Liga das ONGs em Moçambique”.

**Picture 1** – 2015 CSOs National Conference, December 3, 2015, Kaya-Kwanga Conference Hall, Maputo, courtesy of JOINT.



**Picture 2** – Family photo during CSOs workshop on climate change in Mozambique - CSOs contribution to future national regime on climate change, held 20 Oct. 2015, Maputo, courtesy of JOINT.



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This case study was written by Assane Macangira.

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