



Female political participation and their influence towards greater empowerment of women in Mozambique

Sindy Karberg

Index

Acronyms	2
Executive Summary	3
1. Chapter 1: Methodology	4
2. Chapter 2: Background	4
3. Chapter 3: Female Political Leadership and Decision-Making Power - leading to greater empowerment of women?	5
3.1 The political history of Mozambique and the participation of women	5
3.2 Mozambican women - Leadership and decision-making power	7
3.3 The role of civil society in the process of female empowerment	10
3.4 The position and role of women in the Mozambican economy	11
3.5 The role of unions in the process of female empowerment	13
3.6 Social and cultural norms - holding back progress?	13
4. Conclusion & Recommendations	14
4.1 Conclusions	14
4.2 Recommendations to advance women's empowerment	15
Bibliography	17
Websites	18
Annex 1: List of Interview partners	18

Author: Sindy Karberg

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Acronyms

ACTIVA	Mozambican Association of Business and Executive Women
AMRU	Mozambican National Association for Rural Women and Development
ANC	African National Congress
AWEP	African Women Entrepreneurship Program
CEDWA	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CNAM	National Council for the Advancement of Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CTA	Confederation of Economic Associations (Confederação das Associações Económicas de Moçambique)
COMUTRA	Committees of the Working Woman of OTM-CS
COMUT	Committees of the Working Woman of CONSILMO
CONSILMO	National Confederation of Independent and Free Trade Unions of Mozambique (Confederação Nacional dos Sindicatos Independentes e Livres de Moçambique)
FRELIMO	Mozambican Liberation Movement (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique)
GFP	Gender Focal Points
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO/ OIT	International Labour Organization (Organização Internacional de Trabalho)
INE	National Institute for Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estatística)
IPCCS	Institution of Community Participation and Consultation
MDM	Democratic Movement of Mozambique (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique)
MP	Member of Parliament
MULEIDE	Women, Law and Development Association; Mozambique (Associação Mulher Lei e Desenvolvimento)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
OMM	Organization of Mozambican Women (Organização da Mulher Mocambicana)
OTM	Mozambican Workers Organisation (Organização dos Trabalhadores em Moçambique)
PNA	National Plan for the Advancement of Women
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional de Moçambique)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
PARPA	Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty
TCV	All against Violence (Todos contra a Violência)
VAW	Violence Against Women
WDR	World Development Report
WLSA	Women Law Southern Africa

Executive Summary

After centuries of political marginalization, a rapid improvement of female political representation has taken place in many African countries. Political environments have been reformed and women have gained ground in political decision-making. Existing literature often perceives an increasing number of women in parliament and political decision-making positions as an effective tool to achieve gender equality and a greater empowerment of women overall.

Nevertheless, there are contradictory and opposing views, with studies from different countries, like the UK, Rwanda, Botswana, and others, demonstrating that female political participation alone does not automatically lead to better socio-economic development for women overall in these countries.

Thus, the aim of this study is to identify if in the case of Mozambique the female political participation, in practice, leads towards greater gender equality and social-economic empowerment for women in the country, and what the underlying reasons are, since this has not yet been clearly analyzed.

As is the case in many other African countries, women in Mozambique have already inherited a strong role resulting from the country's liberation struggle, followed by the democratization process.

With currently 38 percent female Members of Parliament (MPs), Mozambique has one of the highest female parliamentary representations in Africa, and in the world. Nonetheless, Mozambique is one of the poorest ranked countries on the Gender Equality Index, and women face numerous obstacles in their everyday life, in particular widespread domestic violence, early child marriages, high maternity death, lower education levels, higher HIV/AIDS rates, fewer wage jobs, and lower income.

Mozambique thus seems to demonstrate that a high percentage of female MPs and a fairly high participation of women in the political life, mainly at national level, and in higher level decision-making bodies, has not yet translated into a more equal position of women in general within the society, nor has it strengthened gender equality in their social-economic life. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that this is a fairly new phenomenon in the Mozambican political culture and the influence of female political participation in the future has to be monitored.

Underlying reasons for the low impact of these women on gender equality, till today, can partly be explained by Mozambique's strong patriarchal culture in both social and political life. At the same time, it can also be derived from the strong allegiance, of both men and women, to the ruling party FRELIMO which has dominated much of the political, social and economic sphere since independence of Mozambique.

The strong demand for loyalty to the party determines the whole political and economic decisions made. This study shows that members of FRELIMO usually put the interest of the party before other interests – gender equality being one of them.

The study also finds that women in political-decision making positions are not automatically all advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment. Many women act as individuals, seeking their own interest and benefit, and thus not always actively promoting a general empowerment of women. Cultural understanding and expectations have an additional influence on women's behavior.

The underlying causes that impede women's positions and power to bargain within the decision-making processes, despite the fact that they hold the same positions as men, call for further research to identify behavioral structures and to explore more effective ways to support a change.

The study concludes that the civil society movement for gender equality seems to be the most promising force to overcome the existing obstacles and to improve the empowerment of women in political decision-making positions, leading to a greater empowerment of women as a whole.

The civil society organizations for women's empowerment are particularly strong and obtain a good technical capacity to lobby for their goals, have less allegiance within the political sphere, and act as "a collective women for women voice" rather than individuals.

Chapter 1: Methodology

This study is primarily based on desk research (analysis of studies, reports and academic publications, policy documents, declarations, and media articles) and importantly, it builds on in-depth interviews with key experts, government representatives and civil society organizations.

Interviewing as a method allows for a more detailed inside view of the perception of the different stakeholders, to understand the complexity of the issue and to help give realistic recommendations for further action.

The list of interviewees can be found in Annex 1.

Three chapters follow upon this introduction.

Chapter 2 provides further background and motivation to the study. Chapter 3 presents an analysis of the historical development of female representation in the political system of Mozambique.

It also includes an assessment of the linkages between female political decision-making power and development of the economic and the social empowerment in Mozambique, analyzing the role of the different institutions, labour market, and social norms within the society.

Chapter 4 summarizes and concludes the analysis and provides a set of practical recommendations for possible interventions to overcome existing obstacles for greater women's empowerment.

Chapter 2: Background

Women in parliament and within political decision-making positions are widely seen as a tool to achieve greater gender mainstreaming within the respective country and more gender equality.

Nevertheless, research on a number of countries, including the UK and several Sub-Sahara African Countries (Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa, Burundi, and Botswana) has shown mixed results on the influence of female MPs to foster gender equality in general as well as in the change of the parliamentary culture.

Many of these case studies did not show a positive influence from female MPs towards a more gender sensitive policy and practice (Wang 2012, Brown 2013, and Devlin et al, 2008). However, up to now no clear analysis has been done in the case of Mozambique.

Therefore, the following study will analyze if the female political participation in Mozambique does lead and/or could lead to a greater socio-economic empowerment of women in Mozambique, and identify whether or not actions are needed to improve the status and capacity of women in decision-making positions to reach this goal.

Identifying the true level and features of women's participation in political processes is key to a better understanding of the factors that hinder the development of women; to shed light on how women are represented and how strongly they influence policies to empower women, and what are possible reasons holding them back.

The importance and the visibility of the need to include women in decision making positions and economic development is unquestionable, to achieve the eradication of poverty and shared prosperity.

Mozambique has committed internationally to promote gender equality through the ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the SADC Gender Declaration, and the Protocols of the African Charter on Human Rights and on the Rights of African Women - known as the Maputo Protocol. (Serra, 2007).

At a national level, the Government of Mozambique has incorporated gender issues into legal, policy and institutional frameworks; gender equality and equal rights for men and women are anchored in the constitution, and laws to protect women's rights are in place (Law against Domestic Violence, Family Law, Land Law, etc.).

Mozambican women are today well represented in parliament and throughout the political sphere. 38 percent of MPs are women which is relatively high in comparison to many other, even often more developed, countries (Osorio, 2010)¹.

As a paradox, Mozambique is ranked poorly in the Gender Equality Index (123 out of 130) and is the 11th-worst in terms of Child, Early and Forced Marriage.

Women thus remain marginalized, with higher levels of poverty, informality, and unemployment, and social norms usually undermine women's position in society vis-a-vis men.

The following chapter 3 will outline the political and economic status of women in Mozambique in a historical context, and identify whether or not women obtain decision making power in their respective positions and how they implement them.

Hence, it will evaluate whether women who reach a position of political decision-making power, like parliamentarians, ministers and governors have independent power to take decisions, if they enforce policies supporting women and gender equality, and how this is translated into action in Mozambique.

Bearing in mind the contradictory reality, this study analyses whether the existence of a legal framework and a high level of female political representation leads to a stronger empowerment of women and increased gender equality in the country, or not, and what the underlying reasons are.

Chapter 3: Female Political Leadership and Decision-Making Power - leading to greater empowerment of women?

3.1 The historical development of female representation and gender equality in the political system of Mozambique

To understand and analyze gender relations within the political and social-economic environment in Mozambique, the historical and cultural context of Mozambique and its regions has to be taken into account.

Mozambique has a very strong patriarchal culture within family structures and social relations in all territories of the country, with regional differences; the south with a patrilineal family culture and the north with a matrilineal culture, but both are highly male dominated (WDR, 2012; and Bauer, 2007).

Mozambique gained its independence in 1975, after a long independence struggle, ending 400 years of Portuguese colonization. Through centuries of trade influence, Mozambique obtained strong Islamic influences, particularly in the north coast, marking powerfully the culture in this region.

The first government following independence was formed by the anti-colonial movement Mozambican Liberation Movement (FRELIMO).

Influenced by a socialist ideology, a first paradigm shift towards the status of women took place at this time, where the concept of equality was central. The principles of gender equality were enshrined in the Mozambican Constitution of 1975, and presented an important instrument. Many of FRELIMO's principles were based on the orthodox Marxism that promoted empowerment of women as an inclusive way for development, through wage jobs for both women and men (Sheldon, 1990 and Virgi, 2012).

The first established organ dedicated to women in Mozambique was the Organization of Mozambican Women (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, OMM), created in 1973 during the independence struggle.

¹ World average of female parliamentarians was 19.2 percent in 2011.

The main objective of OMM at the time of creation was, nevertheless, simply to attract women to the liberalization struggle, as an arm of FRELIMO. (Sheldon, 1990 and sapo).

In 1976, when the anti-Frelimo rebel movement (RENAMO) was set up, leading to the civil war², starting in 1978, the previously positive paradigm shift for women's empowerment came to stagnation (WDR, 2012). Nevertheless, women kept playing a major role during the war, and a special women's branch providing military training to women and girls was created.

However, the reality for women was often different to that of men; sexual abuse against women was widespread within the military and women were often restricted to participate in the civil war by carrying out only domestic tasks such as cleaning, cooking and looking after children and wounded soldiers (Mail&Guardian Africa).

By the end of the civil war in 1992, and with the beginning of the democratization phase, having the first multiparty elections in 1994, a second paradigm shift occurred. The democratic system opened the space for a political debate about women's rights. (Conceição, 2010).

Since then, gender equality has become more prominent, both in the national and international political agendas, and women's political representation in Mozambique has progressively improved.

The political representation of women within the political sphere increased from 16 per cent in 1991 to 31 per cent in 2001 and 39.6 per cent in 2009³. After the latest elections in October 2014, the percentage of MPs noticed a slight decrease to 38 percent.

Mozambique ranks 14 among 145 countries in terms of women representation in Parliament. In Africa, only Rwanda, South Africa and the Seychelles rank higher (The Guardian).

Female representatives in the political sphere in Mozambique over time				
	1991	2001	2009	2015
MPs ⁴	16%	31%	40%	38%
Ministers	1	3	4	4
Vice Ministers	1	6	3	8
Governors	N.A.	N.A.	2	4 ⁵
Source: http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Mocambique_Local.htm and Conceição&Quenane 2013				

Mozambique demonstrated its commitment to the importance of gender equality by participating at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

The conference agreed on the international benchmark for women's participation in political decision-making positions of 30 percent for all countries and incentivised Mozambique to establish important gender instruments; like the creation of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs in 2000, the Gender Focal Points and Gender Units in each Ministry, and the creation of a number of non-governmental organization working on the protection of women's rights, e.g. the Women's Forum (Forum Mulher).

In 2005 Mozambique signed the SADC Protocol for Gender and Development – with the goal of reaching 50/50 parity of women in public and private decision-making positions, paving the way for another strong commitment towards gender equality.

In the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique the principle of gender equality was established in Article 36, a principle that can also be found in the Family Law (10/2004), the Law against Violence (2009) and in the Land Law (19/97), among other existing legislation.

In addition, the Government has integrated gender related issues in a number of strategy papers⁶ (Conceição and Quenane 2013; SADC Secretariat, 2009). The aforementioned actions illustrate the solid progress Mozambique has made to ensure a legal framework for the rights and equality of men and women.

However, the practical implementation and enforcement of this legal framework remains elusive and fragmented. Insufficient dissemination strategies, limited sectorial coordination, lack of sufficient budgeting and monitoring, as well as the absence of regulations of the legal provisions hamper the progress of gender equality and women empowerment. (WDR 2012, Conceição 2010, and Serra, 2007).

² Mozambique's civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO lasted from 1978 till 1992.

³ After the recent election in October 2014, the percentage of women representatives dropped slightly.

⁴ Rounded numbers.

⁵ Governors of 4 major provinces, namely Sofala, Gaza, Cabo Delgado and Nampula.

⁶ The Government's commitment to addressing gender inequalities is further evidenced by the increased emphasis on mainstreaming gender in the Government's 5-Year Plan and National Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA II 2006-2011) and adoption of a National Plan for the Advancement of Women 2008 - 2011.

3.2 Leadership and decision making power amongst women in Mozambique

For an improved and holistic understanding of women's representation and the existing practices regarding gender equality, the following section will describe the representation of women within Mozambican political parties, provide an analysis of the existing institutions for gender equality and illustrate the regional differences of gender equality in Mozambique.

Mozambique is officially a multi-party system, with three main active parties⁷, though dominated by the ruling party FRELIMO since independence. RENAMO (Resistência Nacional de Moçambique), the former rebel group, is the largest opposition party and MDM (Democratic Movement of Mozambique/Movimento Democrático de Moçambique) is a breakaway movement from RENAMO, established in 2009.

MDM attracts a more liberal, urban and young Mozambique, in comparison to FRELIMO and RENAMO. MDM was seen during the last local elections in 2013 as the first serious political breakaway from the existing independence parties, winning the three most populated and strategically important municipalities after Maputo (the capital): Beira, Nampula, and Quelimane. Nevertheless, during the last presidential elections MDM could not keep up with the expectation and achieved only 8.4 percent of the votes⁸.

When analysing the representation of women in the here mentioned parties and the parties' respective policies towards gender equality, FRELIMO demonstrates the biggest commitment to women's representation within the parliament with 69 out of 144 seats occupied by women, representing 48 percent of the total.

RENAMO has 23 women out of 89 seats, representing 26 percent, and MDM nominating two women out of 17 seats, representing 12 percent (Noticias Miramar and idolo).

This could be partly explained by the lower number of representatives from the opposition parties (seats in the parliament) and the tendency to first fill them with male representatives (Osorio, 2010).

FRELIMO, as the only party, adopted a voluntary quota system for female MPs, yet the system has not been legally enshrined.

As previously mentioned, women MPs are fairly represented within the ruling party, but they generally only occupy positions without influence.

Nevertheless, changes are visible and with the nomination of Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo, after the latest elections in 2014, as the president of the parliament, by FRELIMO and Ivone Soares, the niece of the RENAMO president, nominated by RENAMO as head of the RENAMO bench of parliamentarians, two powerful positions are represented by women. Nevertheless, besides these nominations, the overall number of women MPs dropped after the last elections without any further implication (EGM, 2005 and Women Watch, 2007). This underlines the weakness of a voluntary quota system and the need to formally legalize the quota system within each party.

Although the quota system has contributed to higher representation of women in the parliament, it has not influenced the quality of the participation within discussions of general interest, and especially regarding women issues. Although studies show that there are no formal barriers for women to access the party, women cannot question the social relations between men and women in the society within their roles, neither the existing norms nor values that characterize the party, nor sensitive social gender relation issues (e.g. penal code).

Women suffer discrimination inside their parties, where men have more privileges, and sexual harassment towards women is widespread. Women are disadvantaged within the distribution of resources, and through discriminatory manifestations, in which the symbolic dimension in the exercise of power becomes especially relevant.

The strong party affiliation and discipline, being accompanied by the thought of inferiority of women compared to men, and women's lack of recognition, determines the role of women in these positions of power (Osorio, 2010 and Conceição, 2013).

As expected, inside FRELIMO, the overall political life and opinions are characterized by a strong party loyalty and patronage, for both women and men. The loyalty and patronage in many cases seem to be more important than democratic values (Interviews).

⁷ At the first multi-party system elections in 1994 a number of small parties participated. 10 smaller parties joined RENAMO in 1994 and transformed into the Renamo-Electoral Union.

⁸ Frelimo reached 55.6 percent and RENAMO 32.95 percent.

Gender representation within different levels and institutions

Women are well represented in Governor and Minister Positions. Yet, recent events have demonstrated that these women often lack support within their own party.

As an example, the governor of Gaza admitted to have suffered from accusations and mistrust based on her sex from both FRELIMO and OMM members (Club of Mozambique).

To support female MPs and other political representatives in institutions and public organs, and tackle gender issues in a holistic way, the Government of Mozambique has established several cross-party bodies, as mentioned before, for consultation and guidance, like OMM, Gender Units, and Gender Focal Points (GFP). These bodies are however often not particularly effective, due to lack of strong leadership, limited follow-up on the agreed activities, as well as lack of technical and administrative capacity (Lele et al, 2011).

OMM, as mentioned above, was originally not created as an institution to defend the fundamental rights of women, but rather a political arm to attract women to the liberation struggle and the party:

“To liberate herself, women assume and creatively live the political line of Frelimo” (Sheldon, 1990).

Graça Machel⁹, the wife of the first president Samora Machel, was especially active within the OMM from 1975 till 1989, and organized the Extraordinary Conference in 1984. Graça Machel and the other team members prepared discussion points on polygamy, bride wealth, initiation rites, family issues, divorce, and domestic violence, amongst other sensitive gender topics.

After FRELIMO members felt threatened by the direction these discussions were taking, the party restrained OMM and made them change the agenda to a more general forum. A statement of Graça Machel at the time was: "The Party thinks that because it created the OMM it can direct it. So the OMM will have problems when it begins to threaten the privileges of men" (Sheldon, 1990).

Still today, some OMM members and representatives state that FRELIMO uses the organisation to mobilize votes, rather than to include them in real decision making processes to foster women's empowerment.

The role as merely an extended arm of FRELIMO can also be demonstrated by the fact that OMM is the selection organ for female candidates to all kind of political position.

Hence, if women in Mozambique would like to hold a public position, they need to first be members of OMM, upon which OMM submits the respective names to the party for elected positions.

(Sheldon, 1990 and 2005; Open Society Institute Network, et al).


Gender Units are established at core Ministries for gender equality, like education, health and agriculture, to coordinate the Gender Focal Points (GFP), which are designed officially for each government unit. Both are operational but not institutionalized.

The role of the Gender Units is to influence and improve the planning and budgeting process on gender topics within all sectors, which makes them key actors for mainstream in gender issues within all Ministries. Unfortunately, the units are technically very weak and have not been able to translate their objective into action (Lele et al, 2011).

The first National Plan for the Advancement of Women (PNAM 2002-2006) was developed in 2002. Shortly after this the National Council for the Advancement of Women (CNAM) was created in 2004 as a consultative body through which the Ministry for Women and Social Action carries out intersectoral coordination.

The main objective of the body is to promote and monitor the implementation of the government's gender policies in all Government plans and programs. The Minister of Women and Social Action is the head of the CNAM, assembled of seven Government Ministers; two Non-governmental organisations (Fórum Mulher and the Community Development Foundation); two representatives from religious groups (the Christian Council of Mozambique and the Catholic Church); a representative from the workers union (the Mozambican Workers Organisation, OTM) and one representative from the private sector (Confederation of Economic Associations, CTA) (Lele et al, 2011).

⁹ Graça Machel, the wife of the first president Samora Machel, was the first female Minister from 1975 till 1989/1990 (Minister of Education and Culture). She was the only female minister during this time. Graça Machel was also active in the OMM and in the FRELIMO Central Committee. She is a Human rights activist and a role model for Mozambican women's empowerment movement (Sheldon, 1990).



Unfortunately, this has not yet translated into a better implementation of gender strategies, since the CNAM lacks recognition and profile within the government (UNIFEM, 2009).

A parliamentary Committee of female MPs was launched to bridge the gender differences within the parties and advance gender issues. Female MPs have been in numerous trainings on a vast range of gender topics.

But a recent example demonstrates that the simple presence of women in the parliament does not strengthen women's rights, as the polemic discussion about the newly approved Penal Code demonstrates.

The Penal Code was provisionally approved in December 2013, replacing the old Penal Code from 1886. But instead of receiving a well thought out Penal Code, after numerous consultation meetings between the civil society and the parliamentary Committee of female MPs, the civil society and NGOs shockingly pointed out that the new code still contained a number of articles that violate human rights and the dignity of girls and women in the country (e.g. in the case of a rape of a underage victim the offendant can avoid any kind of penalty if he marries the victim).

The new Penal Code was heavily criticised – Amnesty International organized an online petition to review the code and drop the human rights violating articles. Fifteen NGOs issued a press release and organized a march to take position against the code.

Despite the pressures from the civil society to remove the articles from the Penal Code, no amendments were made. In fact, civil society organizations were invited for discussions to voice their input on the elaboration of the new Penal Code, yet witnesses reveal that there never existed a truly open dialogue on the matter.

A number of MPs even confessed off the record that they disagreed with the code, yet chose to stay silent during the discussions and decision (Seyagnes 2014, and Interviews). These testimonials demonstrate that women often feel intimidated to stand up for their beliefs.

It is estimated that access to power in Mozambique is determined more by the resources women obtain,

than by the need to represent the interests of, and fighting for greater equality and gender justice (Osorio, 2010), which is an underlying reason for the weak translation of the policies and institutions towards greater gender equality.

The statement from a FRELIMO member illustrates this clearly: “The woman who does not conform to the ways in which political action is structured and ranked hierarchically is penalized by the members of the organization and by the society”. (Sheldon, 2002).

FRELIMO's intent to achieve gender equality was hence perhaps not meant to change basic gender relations at the private and domestic level for the Mozambican population. (Sheldon, 2002 and WDR, 2012).

Most women who have reached a high status of political leadership in Mozambique have assumed a strong “masculinity” on board, behaving as their male colleagues.

This has led to a situation where the existing political environment does not encourage the inclusion of the woman as a subject, like insufficient budgeting for gender issues or the case of the penal code.

Simply giving women decision-making positions does not automatically allow them to make political decisions, especially on sensitive topics. (Women Watch, 2007 and Interviews).

The above section illustrates that there is significant discrepancy between the declared goals of the Government and the actual practice carried out in the country. While necessary legal and institutional instruments are in place, lack of implementation and enforcement result in limited improvement in women's everyday life.

Interviews illustrated the need for concrete actions to promote enforcement and actual implementation of existing frameworks and the creation of new networks, to strengthen the status of women (Interviews).

Regional differences

Female political participation differs within the various regions in Mozambique. While over all national numbers of women in decision-making positions seems promising, a breakdown of participation on a regional level reveals a different picture. In the municipalities and district administrations, the asymmetries of female and male representatives remain strong.

As these entities are crucial for implementing policies and changing behaviours within the culture, it can be argued that there is further imbalance to the cultural status of women (Osorio, 2010). Women's representation is about one fifth at a provincial level and 10 percent at local level. Women are hence better represented at the national and provincial level, than at the local level, except for municipal councils. In other words, women are more widely represented in decision-making positions, where positions are nominated, than in elected executive posts, especially at provincial and local level (WDR, 2012). Paradoxically, on the very lowest regional level, in communities, where we can find the highest potential for changes in gender-relations, women are more likely to be dominant, where they are elected rather than appointed.

Nevertheless, in regions where the leaders are largely the hereditary traditional and religious leaders, it remains highly male dominated. Obviously, regional differences can also be detected here, but even in the north a positive shift towards greater gender equality can be noticed, especially in urban areas. (WDR, 2012). Efforts to increase women's representation have been made for example through a quota rule in the newly created Institution of Community Participation and Consultation (IPCCS) that mandates a minimum 30 percent of each gender to be represented in the IPCCS. Unfortunately, this goal has not yet been achieved and women still represent less than 30 percent (WRD, 2012).

The problem thus seems to be that not enough gender related policies and reforms trickle down to the local level. It is thus with little surprise that the representation of women at meso (provincial and district level) and micro level (communities), as well as in key institutions of the state, such as education, health and justice sector still remains weak and leaves room for improvement. (Open Society Institute Network and WDR, 2012).

3.3 The role of civil society in the process of female empowerment

Civil society organisations for women's empowerment in Mozambique are very active in monitoring the democratic status and pointing out preoccupations in relation to gender inequalities. (Osorio, 2010).

Generally the movement is mainly independent from existing political influences and acts as the true voice and agency for women's rights and empowerment. The international donor community, including bilateral, multilateral donors and NGOs seemed to be the biggest advocates, mainly on the surface, to achieve real change towards greater gender equality, through the recognition of the gender topic within their internal strategies.

Yet as the perceived 'gender mainstreaming' process has been initiated at the government level, some of these advocates have lowered their prioritizations to take action and considered gender topics as less important to be covered. This leads to the reality that only few donor organisations have a real impact on gender equality.

Among the Mozambican NGOs that play key roles are; Women's Forum (Forum da Mulher), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Women's Law and Development (MULEIDE), Gender Link, and Mozambique Federation of Human Rights (Liga Moçambicana dos Direitos Humanos).

Social activism for gender equality and women's empowerment is strong within civil society and is in fact a growing movement. Civil society organisations are key in the struggle for gender equality in the country; a tool to put pressure on the government and politicians, to enforce gender equality issues and women's empowerment (Bauer, 2013, 2014; and WDR, 2012). Civil society for gender equality generally has a good link with the government institutions and is usually vastly consulted during the elaboration of policy documents regarding gender-related issues.

Civil society groups collaborate with female MPs, to help in the process of encouraging women to seek greater involvement in decision-making processes. Female MPs have received training in all possible gender areas by civil society organisations as well as other donor organizations during the last years. Yet interviews revealed that a real openness does not

exist nor the readiness for a true dialogue about how to achieve substantial changes in the way the topic is handled politically (Sayagnes, 2014). It was also noted that till today, although civil society representatives are consulted, the government does not consider their suggestions during decision-making.

Civil society plays an immensely important role, and there is a need to further strengthen their position. The recent developments on the Penal Code is just one example where a change of the humiliating and hostile laws against women could probably only be achieved through strong and persistent opposition by civil society, the community of women and with support of international key organisations.

Even though civil society was already involved in the earlier process of consultation regarding the Penal Code and had given its recommendations, most of their recommendations were ignored.

Influence of the Civil Society in the Fight against Violence Against Women (VAW)

1 in 3 women suffer from gender-based violence, and incidences of reported violence against women (VAW) have been increasing since 2004.

Nevertheless, up to today only a small number of the incidences are reported, which can mainly be explained by women's lack of information about their rights and the believe that violence against women should be dealt with within the family, or that domestic violence is not a crime, and the fear that they will not be taken serious by the police, or even fear of the consequences.

Violence against women has been a central theme for civil society organizations since the 1990's. A national All against Violence (TCV) campaign was called to life to bring together government and civil society to lead a multi-sectorial initiative providing female victims of violence with access to legal counseling, doctors and psycho-social services.

Women's Forum (Forum Mulher) and its member-organizations participated in the World's March of Women in March 2000 and presented the petition for rights including the right to lead a life free of violence to the government. This was the base for the establishment of the Family Law in 2004 and the Law on Domestic Violence Against Women in 2009. (UNIFEM, 2007).

3.4 The position and role of women in the Mozambican economy

The following section will give a short description of the economic development and the labour market situation in Mozambique, followed by an analysis of what role women have played in these areas.

Mozambique has emerged to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world since the end of its civil war in 1992, with an average annual GDP growth of 8.4 percent. The rapid growth has helped to increase the living standards of many Mozambicans, with real per capita income growing rapidly in the 1990s, albeit from a very low base, leading to strong poverty reduction; from 69 percent of the population in 1996 to 56 percent in 2003 (World Bank, 2012).

High GDP growth led by the megaprojects, mainly extractive industries, in recent years has however not resulted in a strong continuing reduction of poverty or the creation of jobs. In fact, poverty reduction has stagnated during recent years and Mozambique remains one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2010). For example, Mozambique ranks very low within the Human Development Index, 178 out of 187 countries, with only 1.2 years of average schooling. The extremely low level of a skilled labour force hampers development, and many companies import foreign work forces to compensate. Approximately 300 000 to 350.000 job seekers are entering the labour market every year at the moment, increasing to approximately 500.000 per annum in the next years. Currently, the number of existing formal jobs is estimated at 700,000, with the majority in the public sector.

The estimated actual number of new created jobs reaches only 18,000 per year, having in mind that the high promises of large (mega) projects and extractive industries could not fulfil their projections on job creation. Only 5.1 percent of the labour force is in formal employment, with the majority being employed in the informal sector (USAID, 2014 and Ulandessekretariatet, 2013, and 2015). Although updated employment data is limited, it is known that unemployment in Mozambique is high with 25.3 percent¹⁰, and is particularly high amongst women¹¹, youth, and in rural areas.

¹⁰ Source from work force survey 2004/2005.

¹¹ Female unemployment rate is 26.8 percent compared to the male unemployment rate of 23.5 percent.

Mozambique demonstrates an elevated number of working poor, with 82% of the working population living on less than \$2 a day (INE, 2015; Ulandessekretariatet, 2013, and 2015). Despite the legal achievements, laws and regulations on gender equality, the labour market in Mozambique still confronts women with many challenges and disadvantages. Although gender parity employment policies are in place that both public and private sector employers aspire to, parity does not yet exist.

Women are even under-represented in jobs that traditionally have been seen as 'female' jobs, such as primary school teachers. Overall, 96 percent of all working women in Mozambique are unskilled labourers working in the informal sector – a mere 4 percent of working women are thus formally employed by the government or private sector.

A majority of women work in subsistence agriculture production, followed by trade and the hotel industry, business services, and administration. Unemployment and youth unemployment is higher among women than men. Women also obtain a lower number of average schooling years, and are disadvantaged in the access to technical vocational training, and are lower represented in higher education.

Combined, these factors limit women's access to formal employment and many times it forces them to accept lower secondary jobs, with lower wages and career paths (USAID, 2014 and Ulandessekretariatet 2014). Mozambique has ratified all eight core ILO Labour conventions¹², including the convention against Discrimination within employment and occupation. In addition, the country has approved a new national Labour Law to enforce equal rights for men and women, as well as to condemn any kind of discrimination based on sex, race, religion, etc.

Yet, women still earn less than men for work of equal value and studies have found that even women who have reached higher education and training, are still facing persisting differences within their career opportunities compared to their male colleagues.

It has also been reported that employers use unethical behaviour if women seek professional advancement, often violating their rights and dignity (sapo; OIT, 2011; and ITUC, 2009).

Women are thus facing a number of obstacles in reaching decision-making positions and leadership status in Mozambique in the working environment. There are no policies or practices in place that would motivate and support women to take leadership.

Even within NGOs, except of gender and women-related organizations, the representation of women in management is only 23 percent and directors are usually men (Serra, 2007 and ILO, 2011). An illustrative example is that despite some achievements for women in the labour market, there are not yet many examples of female CEOs in Mozambique.

Even though women are legally entitled to work, and own their businesses and land, a limited amount of business laws and policies include targeted measures to help support women who are already in a vulnerable position in the labour market. Because of few structured childcare services, and women's social responsibility for elderly care, women often struggle to combine these informal duties with full-time regular working hours.

In addition, women generally lack the necessary resources for starting and developing their own businesses due to gender based barriers, hence the reason why Mozambican women entrepreneurs often still remain in the periphery of the economy.

Mozambique has recently passed a new law on Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development to support the growth and development where the majority of the women entrepreneurs are situated, but the law does not include targeted interventions for female entrepreneurs (Brown, 2013). To overcome existing obstacles, positive discrimination is needed, to lift up women to an equal level. Despite limited interventions specially targeted to support women, there are a number of initiatives and programs with a focus on strengthening women's economic position. ACTIVA, the Mozambican Association of Business and Executive Women, was created in 1990, as a non-political, private association to promote women in their professional development.

Other initiatives like African Women Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP), launched in 2014 in Maputo, assist female entrepreneurs.

Yet these programs have limited success for a number of reasons; mainly because of limited financial resources and missing technical support from external institutions. As for AWEP, it is still too premature to say which kind of results it will produce. (Serra, 2007 and All Africa).

¹² The eight core conventions of the ILO are: Convention No. 87, on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organize, and Convention No. 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining, Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration and ILO Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour in 2003, and Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour in 1977.

3.5 The role of trade unions in the process of female empowerment

With 23 trade unions, Mozambique has a relatively high number compared to other countries. The trade unions are grouped into two main federations; The Mozambican Trade Union Centre (Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique, OTM-CS), and the Independent National Confederation of Unions (CONSILMO - Confederação Nacional dos Sindicatos Independentes e Livres de Moçambique).

OTM-CS was established in 1975 with a strong link to FRELIMO. The memberships have declined since 1987 when there was a heavy drop in salaried workers and have not fully recovered since. CONSILMO was founded in 1992 as a breakaway from the OTM-CS and its strong relation to FRELIMO. (Ulandssekretariatet, 2014).

Trade unions in Mozambique are generally seen as weak and don't hold strong support and a positive perception within the society. They very often lack technical, legal, economic capacity and up to date information on the economic trends (both nationally and global), which hamper their effectiveness, democratic functions, and added value for workers.

The Government allocates a small operational budget (subsidies) to all unions that does not cover even the basic costs of sustaining an office. The role of the government as an independent mediator is problematic, since the government is the biggest employer in the public sector and an elevated number of government officials are entrepreneurs and have their own respective interests that do not align with the unions' goals. (Artur, 2004).

Surveys showed that today, only 25 percent of the union members (OTM) in Mozambique are women. All Trade Unions in general show a low representation and weak participation of women. This leads to a weak capacity to defend women's rights and low bargaining power for better conditions.

The Committees of the Working Woman are also weak and face a lack of fundamental financial resources. Other legal bodies that represent women in the labour market are the Mozambican Association of Women in Legal Profession and the Association of Rural Women (AMRU), amongst others (Serra, 2007; ILO, 2011; and Ulandssekretariatet, 2014).

Trade unions also partner with civil society organisations like the Women's Forum to strengthen their position in this area.

To mobilize more female workers to join the trade unions, two Committees of the Working Woman (COMUTRA in OTM-CS and COMUT in CONSILMO) were established in 1993. Their role is to provide an adequate platform for discussing the problems and specific needs of women workers, and to identify ways and tools to support women and improve their working conditions (Artur, 2004).

To guarantee a more effective and stronger position of the trade unions, sustainable financing mechanisms need to be established, the provision of information and the existing image within the workers has to be improved, and more women and youth should be recruited.

The committees for women need to engage with all relevant topics and not stay marginalized in typical women areas, like maternal leave and child care topics, rather include wages and working hours, conditions, environment, etc., to ensure a holistic inclusion of women and strengthen their position in the labour market.

3.6 Social and cultural norms: holding back progress?

Knowing the role of social and cultural norms in the society is essential in order to adapt policy decisions towards gender equality adequately. Social and cultural norms as well as their ability to change play a strong role in women's position in the Mozambican society and possible effective policy decisions to generate change.

As demonstrated through the low ranking in the international Gender Equality Index and through the position in terms of Child, Early and Forced marriage, the female population in Mozambique remains trapped in poverty, informality, and unemployment, and the women's position in the society is still undermined by their male counterparts.

The country's strong patriarchal culture and the domination of formal and informal institutions by men partly explain this reality. Family continues to be based on a highly hierarchical system, which generates inequality between men and women.

As mentioned before, Mozambique is divided between a patrilineal and a matrilineal society. The patrilineal society defines the family roots following the male line, whereby the matrilineal culture follows the family of the mother.

In reality this means that in patrilineal systems men take ownership of the resources of all aggregates within the family and it is the man who authorizes the women to use certain resources. In matrilineal societies goods usually pass from generation to generation through the mother's family.

Therewith, matrilineal cultures strengthen women's position in the society since the house and the children continue as part of the woman's family after a divorce or death. Nevertheless, matrilineal descent does not mean that women hold the formal power; in fact, the power of decision is vested in the mother's brother (maternal uncle) that holds the right to distribute the assets and resources. So both cultural mechanisms reflect the dominance of men. (Sarmiento, 2011).

Whilst analyzing gender roles, it has to be recognized that there is no single social model for Mozambican women since the gender-specific relationships differ greatly from region to region due to the strong heterogeneity of the country. The various political and social models (colonization, civil war, communism, capitalism) have affected the gender relations constantly and today there is a large variety of behavioral relationships that are difficult or impossible to classify.

In this context the increasing urbanization and economic development have a strong influence and it is possible to speak of ongoing changes. (Tvedten et al, 2013).

It is not possible to categorize "the Mozambican woman", since every woman is an individual and feels differently according to their economic, social and cultural terms and their subjectivity. There are also differences within the gender relations between poor and better off-households, as well as rural and urban throughout the country (Tvedten et al, 2009). Nevertheless, women in general, from all classes and regions, are still subordinated to men within their families.

To improve gender equity in all existing spheres, new and innovative pathways of change need to be identified, including men as agents of change.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

This study concludes that the fact of having a high percentage of women in parliament and in high level political decision-making positions does not automatically imply that these elected or nominated women are going to be allies for gender issues and push gender policies.

Despite a number of legal commitments to guarantee gender equality, there is a gap of practical instruments to implement these commitments and political will to change the culture towards gender equality.


The study also shows that women's interests are not always aligned with an overall gender interest. Women's interests are often diverse and depend on the individual's own best interest and factors such as class, religion, experience etc., and especially in Mozambique, their degree of loyalty to their political party.

Therefore, it might be more helpful to rather define what the existing gender issues are, since they tend to be more precise, and divide them into practical and strategic issues. Thus facilitating a better presentation towards the political decision-makers, in which practical issues cover women's position in the society (e.g. literacy programs, child care programs) and structural issues general social goals. (Sheldon, 1990).

Previous studies have shown that the structure of a country's political system defines how effective women's participation in policy making is (EGM, 2007). In the case of Mozambique with a dominant party system, where the ruling party FRELIMO influences most spheres of political, economic and social life, the unquestionable loyalty to the party is essential.

Some forces within the party restrict women's influence and simply instrumentalise female representatives to mobilize women votes, rather than integrating a holistic, true gender perspective. (Women Watch, 2007).

A number of factors can be identified that influence how much a female MP or women in decision-making positions will defend gender issues and strengthen women's empowerment.



How a woman achieved a particular position is crucial. Interviewers and existing studies argue that women who fought their way up, passing through different political stages and earning experience and legitimacy are more likely to be a key player and a catalyst of change.

If a woman has been nominated or been put in a place simply because of the quota, or as substitute for her spouse, in case he cannot be re-elected, she will rarely be empowered enough to speak out loud (EGM, 2007 and interview).

Following the direction of FRELIMO and being loyal seems to be very important for all party members, both women and men. As shown in the example of OMM and the Penal code, female MPs many times stayed silent even if they did not agree with the decisions, or changed their direction, as in the case of OMM, to obey the party ideology and direction. Lack of intention to change the basic relations at the private and domestic level between men and women might be the cause.

Even OMM, the institution to recognize the voice of women in the country, was always in a sub-ordinated position to the male dominated Frelimo. Women are accountable to their party first, and only after this they act as a woman (WDR, 2012; EGM, 2005; and Sheldon, 2002).

Although structures have been created where Gender Groups, Focal Points, the civil society, and leading NGOs in the struggle for gender equality are invited to give their thoughts and inputs to political decisions, a real openness for a dialogue and discussion was never given (Sayagnes, 2014 and Interviews).

Additionally, the difficulty for women to fulfil both of their expected roles, the parliamentarian role and the traditional expected role as a woman, should not be undervalued. Women often feel intimidated by the male dominated political system and hesitate to voice their opinion.

Women need the support of powerful individuals or groups, to give them financial and social-political capital, without this they are not able to achieve influential political power.

The network of civil society, with its capacity training and network provision can be a strong potential actor for support and change. To better support women in

the struggle of finding this support, more research, on how women in Mozambique strategize, struggle, and finally succeed in mobilizing these assets (EGM, 2007), needs to be done.

A number of researchers point out that political parties based on individuals' self-interest and dominated by patronage and a high level of corruption, like in Mozambique, are less responsive to external influences promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (EGM, 2007). Therefore, the role of the civil society in Mozambique is fundamental and key in the fight for gender equality. The movement is strong and growing, and holds the highest potential for influencing the policies and cultural environment.

4.2 Recommendations to strengthen women's empowerment

The following section will demonstrate a series of policy recommendations that could be useful to advance and strengthen women's participation and leadership within the political environment in Mozambique. To better strategize further activities and implications, the recommendations will be categorized in the here analysed spheres; the political, economic (labour market), and social (civil society) sphere.

As demonstrated throughout the paper, to overcome gender inequality and achieve real empowerment of women's voice and status, it is important to not only have women be present in decision-making positions, but also empower their status and perception within the society and institutions, as well as the number of women.

This way more empowered and sensitized women can influence policies and strategies, for a stronger social-economic development of all women. Vice versa, an improved economic status of women can lead to enhanced opportunities for accessing and ensuring effective participation in decision-making institutions, based on the stronger status within the society (EGM, 2005).

Within the political sphere, an active and open dialogue in the multi-party system would give stronger potential to create alliances for women in the struggle for greater gender equality.

To strengthen the position of women it is highly important to have female representation in the execu-

tive branch of the government, since these positions are key to implement laws and can foster women's empowerment (EGM, 2005). The quota system needs to be legally enshrined to guarantee the equal participation of women and further increase their presence.

The political representation women obtain within the higher levels of political institutions needs to be simultaneously reflected at the lower levels of communities, through encouragement and sensitization (Tvedten et al, 2013). The existing Gender Units need to be strengthened and an adequate national budget for gender mainstreaming needs to be guaranteed.

To ensure the effective implementation of the existing strategies on gender equality, institutions need to be empowered and the male bias in decision-making organs on all levels needs to be reduced. The government needs to increase the awareness about the need and positive economic and social effects of greater gender equality, and address existing cultural and traditional practices that impede the equity of women in all levels of the society.

Programs to disseminate values of equality and citizenship should already be included in the education system, to reach the younger generation and guarantee a change in social behaviour. Cultural practices that seriously undermine the rights of girls, especially early marriage, need to be criminalized and judged with special focus on the community level. (WSLA, 2007).

To increase the status of women within the labour market, the IFC had already recommended in 2007 that a special government advisory board for women's business development services should be set up. Additionally, the promotion of women's enterprise developments should be anchored in Mozambique's gender policy and implementation strategy. To support the growth of female businesses, the establishment and reinforcement of formal and more extensive networks for women business owners in Mozambique is needed.

This should include the organization of regular meetings with other women business owners across the country to share ideas, experience best practices and build mentoring relationships (Serra, 2007 and IFC, 2011). To improve women's situation within wage jobs, mechanisms need to be established, including the private sector, to ensure the dissemination of

women rights and obligations of employers, as well as demonstrate the advantages of women in formal wage jobs for both the economy as a whole and the enterprise.

Trade Unions hold a strong potential to enhance women's status and opportunities in the labour market. Therefore, the committees for women need to assure a more sustainable financing and engage in all areas of discussion, not only purely women related issues.

Trade Unions could include quotas in their leadership roles to ensure a stronger participation of women – which would send enforced signals to women that their issues are represented and lead to an increase in female memberships.

The civil society already holds an important role in the gender equality movement and has potential to be the driver to push the development forward. Possible interventions and activities which could be supported by the civil society are:

- i) support the participatory budgeting process at the municipal level;
- ii) educate citizens on good governance;
- iii) support the development of a gender-sensitive curriculum and teacher training, and strengthen citizen training in schools;
- iv) carry out public awareness raising campaigns and
- v) facilitate the link between decision-making positions to give support and counselling (EGM, 2007 and interviews).

i) The support of the participatory budgeting process at the municipal level is a useful tool to ensure that the policy commitment will match the allocated resources and gives the local community the possibility to participate in the decisions.

ii) To educate citizens on good governance is a tool to promote the necessary equal position of women and to demonstrate that the government is accountable for this.

iii) To support the development of a gender-sensitive curriculum and teacher training, and strengthen citizen training in schools will ensure that new generations of citizens change their culture and perception of women's roles in the society, economy and political sphere.

iv) To carry out public awareness raising campaigns will sensitize the whole community, including men.

v) To facilitate the link between women in decision-making positions to give support and counselling and strengthen their position.

(EGM, 2007 and interviews).

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Annex 1 - List of Interview partners:

Name	Position/ Institution
Mrs. Amelia Matos Sumbana	Ambassador of Mozambique to the United States
Mrs. Graca Samo	Executive Director Women's Forum
	International Coordinator Marcha Mundial das Mulheres
Mrs. Terezinha da Silva	WLSA National Coordinator in Mozambique
Mrs. Shaida Seni	Lead of Business Environment, German Development Cooperation, (GIZ), Mozambique
Mrs. Carla Saida	Head of Admin & Finance-Program, Education Program, German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Mozambique
Mr. Ascensão Machel	Reform Advisor German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Mozambique
Mrs. Unaita Jaime	Gender Specialist, Mozambique
Mrs. Edda Van den Bergh-Collier	Former UN Gender Specialist in Mozambique
Mrs. Kerry Sylvester	Social Inclusion and Gender Specialist Mozambique

