



# TEARING US FROM OUR LAND, TEARS OUT OUR ROOTS.

VOICES OF THE WOMEN FROM CABO DELGADO

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TEARING US FROM  
OUR LAND,  
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VOICES OF THE WOMEN FROM  
CABO DELGADO



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## INTRODUCTION

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Since early October 2017, an armed conflict has overshadowed the lives of the people of Cabo Delgado province. In these last 5 years, and according to data made available on October 12, 2022, by the bulletin 'Cabo Ligado', 4,322 people have died as a consequence of organized violence. So far it has been impossible to count how many people perished due to indirect causes derived from forced displacement, trauma, the absence of health services, or the impossibility to produce food.

According to the International Organization for Migration, by the end of September 2022, 946,508 people have been counted as internally displaced, which represents 40.79% of the province's population. Of these, 55% are children, 24% are women and 21% are men whereas, from the total of displaced people, only 30% (287,664) are in shelters or resettlement centres. The remaining 70% (658,844 people) are living in relatives' houses, in houses rented or lent by relatives and other people.

One of the most dramatic consequences of this situation is the biggest humanitarian crisis that Mozambique has known since the end of the 16-year war, with about one and a half million people with urgent need of food support for immediate survival.

It is not only the population that has been fleeing away from their places of origin, but also those hosting them, who are experiencing a situation of extraordinary vulnerability over these last five years.

Based on the data presented, two important things can be noted. The first is that the majority of people in refugee situation are women and young girls. This means that they are the ones who have suffered the most from this displacement situation and all the violence that this has meant. The second is that, knowing that in an eminently patriarchal society like the Mozambican, it falls to women and young girls the tasks of organizing the house, wash, cook, fetch water, take care of the children, elderly people and sick ones, and cultivate vegetable gardens and fields. They are the ones who, in the houses, where they shelter relatives who have fled from districts, are being overburdened with work and worries, including managing the conflicts that always arise in these situations of distress, trauma, and lack of all kinds of resources to meet the most basic needs.

Yet, little or nothing is heard or known about what these women think, feel, and do in this context of war and enormous social, spiritual, and emotional trauma. Their voices and their knowledge about the war and what needs to be done to achieve peace have been loudly absent. Besides, the specific situation lived by young girls and women, and the violences that are inflicted on them because of their sex and gender, has been neglected not only in the media, as well as by the authorities, and in much of the research carried out by national and foreign experts. There are two main strategies for the invisibility of women in this panorama. The first one is to recurrently and only emphasize their place as victims. They are presented time and again as people in despair incapable of thinking beyond their own misfortunes. The second one, is to consider irrelevant almost everything they say, think, and propose, both about violence as well as about the peace that is intended to be built, strong and lasting. When war and peace are decided only between men, whether military or politicians,

what women think and do is always considered of little or no importance, even though it is them and their work that has allowed the population of Cabo Delgado to survive each day and to each tragedy brought on by war so that life can continue to happen.

This publication is the result of two years of dialogues with several women from Cabo Delgado, authors of the thoughts, analyses and texts that follow next and should be read, known, and taken seriously by everyone, in and outside of Mozambique. It is important for the readers to bear in mind that this book is made up of oral statements expressed in various languages, especially Makwa and Portuguese, since many of them are speakers of various national languages. They were heard and transcribed in the languages the authors chose to speak. They were then validated by them and finally translated. We chose not to interfere in the way they express their ideas. Therefore, when reading this book, one should value the diversity of forms of expression and the unique way in which each one uses the language she has chosen to converse in. We know that translations are always complex and sensitive processes and that they can produce unforeseen interferences in some of the meanings of each language. However, through the validation process we have worked together to ensure that each one of us feels comfortable with the version that is now reaching you.

Feminist activists from various provinces of Mozambique, Angola, Colombia, and the Basque Country were involved in these dialogues. The objective of all is common: Gender Justice to achieve a lasting effective Peace.

Maputo, November 2022

Editorial Committee



## EPIGRAPH

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Wezu was waiting for me with a hug warmer than the day's sun. I felt that, somehow, I had arrived at home where we sit on the mat and tell stories that go on healing the wounds. After hugging me, Wezu said to me: "Sister, you know, this transparent sea of mine, is the mirror of wide and juicy spiritual baobab and kapok trees full of open fruit releasing their wool; from the cotton that flutters above the marzipan trees and the frondose tamarind trees full of juicy pods. In this transparent sea of mine I see the joyful goats playing with the children, rolling the red lands in thin and colourful mists, and I hear the chirping of the birds and the deaf steps of the lionesses. It's an immense expanse of green and blue and transparent sea that, from time to time, revolts along with the wind in fine white crests. But it is also the mirror of the sweat that runs down the skins of the women, without mercy, because of the weight of the baskets full of dried cassava. And the war, sister, the war drips even more because it drips dark, hidden blood, that rots the flesh and the soul, and the screams muffled by broken dreams. I am Wezu, sister, and I have a sea of cold sweat tattooing my heart.

We went together along the paths we decided to walk together and there are lamentations, screams, and lucid whispers about what is happening in this part of the world, the ones we hear. There are many lives that unravel in words like beaded necklaces of many colours that tell us and say to us how the war is happening in Cabo Delgado and how it can be ended. This is our notebook where we have all been writing what nobody seems to care in listening and, even less, taking it seriously. It stays here for all of you who want to acknowledge what we have to tell you, for us to reconcile.





## THERE'S WAR IN CABO DELGADO

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**Yasu<sup>2</sup> analyses extensively the multiple causes of the war in Cabo Delgado without letting herself be tempted by simplistic explanations.**

Behind this are, for example, the ethnic issues, the cultural issues that divide the various existing groups at the level of the province of Cabo Delgado, which is something that is always considered as historical. For quite a long time, there has been this issue of some feeling privileged in relation to others, which is the case, for example, the Makonde. For a long time, there has been this perception that the Makonde's are more privileged in relation to other groups (Mwanis and Makwas), because of the participation of this ethnic group in the liberation struggle.

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<sup>2</sup> The names used in this publication are pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity and safety of all the authors.



Then there was that reintegration process that made them have more privileges because they were reintegrated to be able to receive the positions and so forth. And there are these other groups that did not have this same luck, this same opportunity, so in some way this ends up influencing how some see themselves in relation to others.

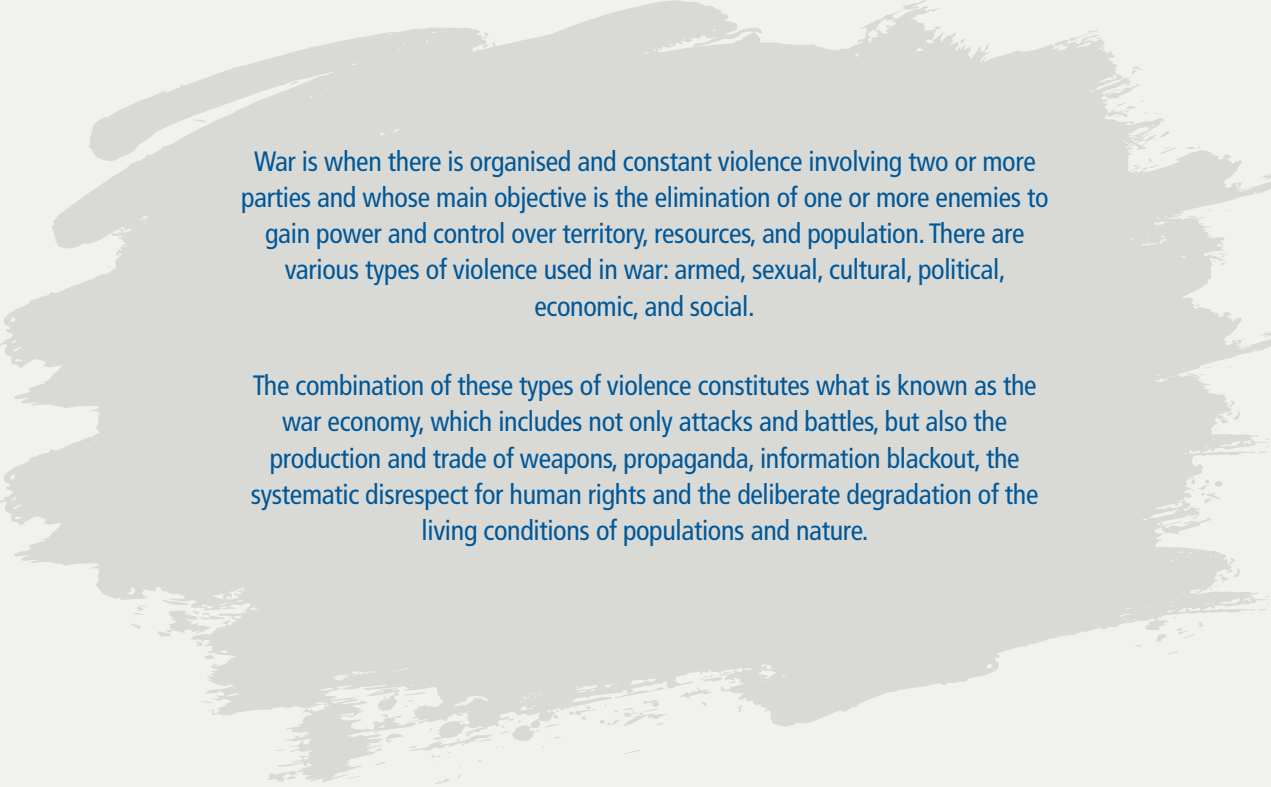
Looking a bit at this issue of dissatisfaction. They call people from Maputo to be builders, they call people from Maputo to sweep, so there is this feeling that we, the owners, are not benefiting from those that are our resources. So, I think that this may have also influenced the popular uprising to make them easily join this movement. There are some of the audios that were circulating where they were saying: we are defending what is ours.

But I also see something that can't be overlooked, which is the very issue of high poverty levels within the province. So this issue of high levels of poverty at the Provincial level in Cabo Delgado may also lead to a feeling of dissatisfaction from the people, and they can easily be lured. That is, someone has an underlying objective and can use the fragility that these people have to benefit from it.

In addition, I also look a bit at the issue of high illiteracy rates. I have for me that our government, our state, has not looked very closely at the issue of education because it is possible to manipulate someone who has a low level of education. We know what happens when we are in times of electoral campaign in which people are manipulated in exchange for a T-shirt, in exchange for a plate of food, in exchange for a capulana. So, this issue of low discernment capacity of the population itself has always been used to manipulate. So, I look at the situation that happens today at the level of Cabo Delgado as something that, perhaps, is beneficial to leave the population illiterate because they can manipulate them as they wish.

I don't know if I should talk a little bit about something that has to do with the external hand, because I don't have much information about it, but I don't doubt that, effectively, this can also influence. We know that we are talking about a business, and within that business there are also other countries that have the same business, and it is possible that somehow, they can support or finance this war to destabilize the country.

Today, if what is effectively happening in Cabo Delgado is a result of somebody who comes from outside and uses the fragility of this population to manipulate, it is also a result of what we have always let pass and have used to our advantage, and now it is turning against us.



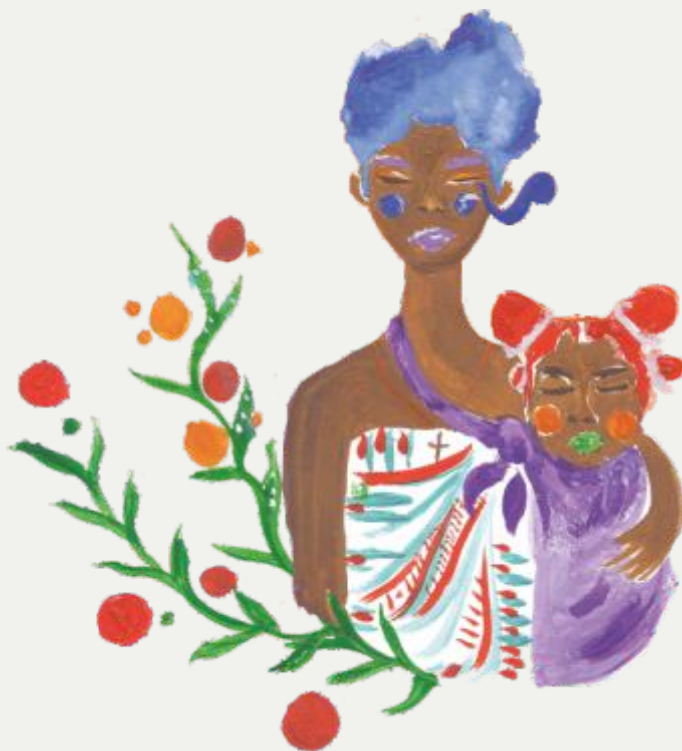
War is when there is organised and constant violence involving two or more parties and whose main objective is the elimination of one or more enemies to gain power and control over territory, resources, and population. There are various types of violence used in war: armed, sexual, cultural, political, economic, and social.

The combination of these types of violence constitutes what is known as the war economy, which includes not only attacks and battles, but also the production and trade of weapons, propaganda, information blackout, the systematic disrespect for human rights and the deliberate degradation of the living conditions of populations and nature.

But there is also the very question of resources that cannot be left out. Cabo Delgado is a province with many resources, many indeed. One of the things that I have always mentioned is that when the first attack started at the level of Cabo Delgado province, coincidentally we had that mass expulsion at the level of the Montepuez district. Those who know Cabo Delgado know that in Montepuez there were people coming from all over Mozambique, but also from many countries from Africa, Europe, and Asia. That is to say, there was a small world inside Cabo Delgado. So, many who practiced that activity were people who used to buy those stones from the illegal artisanal miners who practiced that.

In 2017, the Governor in coordination with the Ministry of Defence, unleashed a campaign to remove all the people who were practicing illegal mining at the level of Montepuez and, in this process, those people were repatriated. But what they were doing, was going to the border between Tanzania and Mozambique. From Mueda we border with Tanzania, and from Palma. But how did the process happen? Those people were taken and left there in the border. From there, people had to find by themselves their way out. So, firstly, we are not sure if, effectively, those people left; secondly because those people may also have unleashed a feeling of revolt since a lot of their possessions were taken away from them. Some had cars, others had stores, shacks that they had already conquered at the level of Montepuez district and that was taken away from them just like that, simply and without further ado: "you got 24 hours to get out of here, see for yourself what you do with your possessions, but you get out of here".

The nationals immigrated to the neighbouring districts as was the case of Ancuabe where they began to practice artisanal mining in those areas. So, there were reports that the police themselves, would first take away the documents. They would take away the documentation and then those people would get an illegal status and they would have to leave. So, I think that somehow this may have influenced for the outbreak of this war. These people may have gained feeling of rebellion and wanted to do something to be able take revenge.



But another point that perhaps makes sense to mention also, is that there was a bit of this notion that there were, at the level of our country, not only in Cabo Delgado, inactive terrorist cells. But when an opportunity opened up, it was the space in which the war could be unleashed. Some of those who were leading the war in Cabo Delgado arrived in 2013 and settled themselves in Niassa province, bought stores there, gas stations, and went on entrepreneuring. And the people who were interviewed said, when questioned why they were there: because we are investing. But they also said that it was because they were recruiting people, because we want to make war in Cabo Delgado because the Mozambicans have many resources, and they don't know how to explore them. They were Africans coming from other countries that had already settled in Niassa province.

The causes of wars are multiple and complex. There are never purely national wars nor wars provoked only by external agents.



**Najila, originally from Mocímboa da Praia, does not spare criticism to the highest leaders of the country. She explains:**

In my opinion, this war is not just about mineral resources. This war is about power. I could say to Comrade Nyusi, if he was my relative, you can resign to see if we, the population, can breathe a bit. It's a question of power. There was that fight, that's why many of us accuse Guebuza of knowing about this issue. There was even a contract of Guebuza with ANADARCO, a 50-year contract. And Nyusi annulled that contract. Nyusi annulled it, then after annulling that contract then this conflict already arises because it was because of these mineral resources.

They used Islamic terrorists to penetrate in Mocímboa, to convince more young people in Mocímboa. In this war they took advantage of those young people from Mocímboa. Precisely, those young people accepted it, because there's a contradiction in Mocímboa. The owners of Mocímboa don't want outsiders, they say that Mocímboa is theirs, so they penetrated into Mocímboa with this Muslim religion, this Islamic religion, calling it the al-Shabaab mosque.



**Sucena explicates the reprisals occurred against people who denounced the abnormal presence of armed people in the villages and towns.**

I can say that our government is guilty because when they arrived in Mocímboa in 2014 they came with a Muslim religion that they said was an al-Shabaab mosque and they covered the whole face, only their eyes could be seen and they wore a dress down to the bottom; on their waists they had pistols, knives, machetes. So, it was the population who discovered more things and when they reached the government and informed them, they were told that there was no substance to it. Or they would inform that in house 'x', are more that many people, those people are strangers. The army would go there to inspect, they would get there and after inspecting the house the owners would revolt: you heard it from whom? And they would disclose that they heard it from so-and-so. And those people would look for that person and it was normal to find that person dead in the early morning. Everyone who saw them would just keep quiet and keep the hands folded because they were afraid of being denounced.

I remember a village chief who went to inform the PRM: "we have more than fifteen people in a singular house, and they say they come from Quissanga, Quiterajo and Mucojo, but those people are strangers to me". So, they went there, the police went to inspect and everything. They arrived at the command after the investigation and said that there was no problem. That night they rebelled and went to kill that village chief. They really beheaded him, cut off his tongue, cut off his head.

That to say that our government from the beginning overlooked this issue, but now it is becoming difficult because it has already developed roots. It's very sad.





**Farida adds the following.**

We no longer have anywhere to go, but we blame the government. I can go to jail, but mainly, it is Guebuza who knows about this matter. Although I am from the government, a member of Frelimo, but Guebuza knows about this issue and Nyusi no longer knows how to deal with it. He didn't know about this here and they came plugging his eardrums, with a padlock they locked his mouth, and he is calm too. And what is happening now?

Those are sent from Maputo to here; they are winning, and they are not defending us. They even organize themselves in groups to go to a village to attack. For the population it's difficult to identify who is the evildoer and who is from the military. It happened in Mocimboa in March 2020, after an attack and after al-shabaab left, those military started invading those stores, took the goods and forgot that they should be defending. They would enter a store and take beer leave it opened and stay there drinking.





## THE 5 PHASES OF WAR SEEN AND ANALYSED BY YASU

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**In the first phase there were violent attacks, but people fled and returned. Besides that, the government's narrative was that it was about something small and controllable.**

When the attacks began, they tried to use the excuse that "we are with the people and we want to free you from the oppression of the state so that you can, effectively, be able to achieve what you desire and are not being able to achieve". Then, at a certain moment, the government managed to gain a bit of sympathy from the population and there was a slight movement of the population towards being able to support the government. The insurgents began to realize that they were losing ground.

Then they started to make these attacks. There was an attack in the village of Mocímboa itself where they attacked banks, commercial establishments and took that money and distributed it. Then they published some

videos in which you see them with trucks full of products that were taken from the local traders and the population applauding and saying in the local language: you are our saviours, you are indeed with us, you are the ones who take care of us.

So, once again the issue of social inequalities was playing a preponderant role in the way in which the population positioned itself over this danger. I think that there was a little of the feeling that the population didn't have the dimension of what was happening and the danger that this represents for us in Mozambique.

But after they have performed those successive attacks, they began to motivate the first displacements of people, but in a timid way, because the government always tried to bring a bit of this feeling: - look it's not something of a big dimension, we will control it, go back to your homes, go work in the farm fields. Between 2017 and 2018, we had this situation where people would flee away but return, fleeing and returning. Whereas at that time we didn't have these massive entries at the level of the city of Pemba, at the level of the other districts that, in quotes, are safe.

**Things began to change, and a second phase of the conflict sets in. Inaction by the government is witnessed, as well as a lack of capacity to act to end the violence. People start to flee and not returning or taking time to return to their places of origin.**

There was an expectation from almost all of us that the government would come out on television and say, 'look, we're succeeding, there was a counterattack in district 'x', and so many insurgents were killed. There was a bit of this hope that the situation would be normalizing. But after successive attacks, they gained ground, spread to the other districts and made the population realize that, after all, this situation was not being controlled. I think that somehow that explains the massive exits of the population itself. The population began to realize that there is no such protection as it was pretended to exist: - we are effectively in a situation of danger and that we need to do something in order to protect ourselves.

In the 1990s we witnessed a fundamental change in terms of the nature and the profile of wars in the world: we moved from the Cold War logic of war between states, to intra-state war.

The economics of war that are associated with these armed conflicts - the phenomena of forced displacement of human multitudes, the brutality of the means employed, the mass violation of human rights, the destruction of infrastructure and of the environment and the multiplicity of warring actors - make these so-called 'new conflicts' have an increased complexity, also because they occur in a globalized world, subjected to social and political relations deeply marked by contradictions and inequalities that tend to produce globalized wars.

**In this third phase mistrust sets in and becomes widespread. It can be affirmed that the war fronts are both military and civilian.**

The war in Cabo Delgado is a bit complex because there are a series of successive actions that explain a little bit how it happened until we got here. I remember that it was in the year 2019 that there was a situation where the insurgents were meeting with the population, mainly at the level of the markets, and they were using the Islamic religion, saying that: 'God is with you, God has communicated us that you are going to be blessed and when this blessing comes you must not deny it.' But when they started the recruitment, some people started feeling afraid because they didn't understand why they were saying they were blessed and why they were going to get some support. When they decided to support the people, the people kept investing. We really saw in Mocímboa the proliferation of stores, of stalls, the markets were full, not of little wooden stalls, but of improved stalls.

But then it started to unleash that phase where they said that the recruitment was already compulsive. Those people who had no idea of why they were getting that money when they started to flee were recruited compulsively. So, it's very complex, we are defending with blood, with all our lives, those who are there.

One day I heard a colleague saying: - look, two or three ladies were caught in the hosting centre in Metuge talking daily with their husbands. Then they questioned: 'if you are talking with your husbands, where are those husbands? Why aren't they here at the hosting centre if you fled your areas of origin fleeing from the war? How come your spouses are not here?' So, it was followed up and they found out that effectively they communicated with the husbands who were there in the bush attacking. So, it's complex, and everyone was already suspicious.

**As time passed and events unfolded, the people, their homes, their possessions, farms, and all kinds of infrastructure that make life in villages and towns possible, came under attack through an extraordinary violence.**

After they took over Mocímboa, they began to spread out and there were many killings, and they burned the houses and farm fields. People started to flee away. People flee and would leave everything behind. Everything got out of control. In Pemba city every day was a disgrace of people arriving, women giving birth on boats and on the beach, old ladies and children that did not resist and died. Men without knowing what to do. There were months of great affliction and there was not even time to think. In Pemba it was full. In Metuge it was full. And everyone was already suspicious.

It was when the Rwandan troops arrived that things started to calm down. In the city now are seen SADC military bases and soldiers everywhere. They parade around, they leave the city, and then come back. It's full of militaries.



According to Yasu, the timeline of this war between 2010 and 2020 can be traced as follows:

2020	Mocimboa da Praia is taken and mass escapes begin
2019	Violence erupts and mistrust spreads
2018	From illusion to disillusion
2017-2018	Escape and return
2010-2017	The incubation of war



Yasu notes that in the last two years the province has become militarised and that the myth of the efficacy of violence takes place. At the same time that peace seems to be a mirage, women and their proposals are left out of all formal efforts to end the war.

It is difficult to say that the Mozambican people is happy because we are always coming out of phases of war; a conflict starts and ends; another conflict starts; another conflict arises. So, to say that the Mozambican people live well or is at peace is only on people's lips, but concretely this peace does not exist.

One of the things that has rarely been noticed, or few times talked about, is the resolution 1325 that foresees that we all take into account the inclusion of women in all negotiation spheres that have to do with the component of conflict and peace. This means that if we want to address the issue of women it is required that we have these women within these bodies to intervene and defend, allowing that there is a recognition of the rights of these women within these bodies since the beginning of the negotiation process to guarantee that these women's rights are safeguarded.

The decisions that are taken in the negotiation rounds have impact in the whole society and not just on conflict actors. If women are absent from negotiations and from the peace processes, where power relations are being negotiated as well as new institutions and social and political structures emerge, their problems, ideas and needs are not only invisible but also ignored. Thus, another opportunity to achieve a post-conflict society with equality between women and men, is lost.



CABO DELGADO: WHERE PEOPLE ARE PROVISIONAL, AND WOMEN CAN NO LONGER SLEEP.  
ONLY WAIT AND DESPAIR

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Zaia explains that when one runs away from home and leaves everything behind what is desired is that it can be a temporary situation. After three years it seems like the situation is far from being transitional and there is already discussion of resettle far from the place of origin. However, the policies are badly dimensioned and are not producing the necessary practical effects.

You are told that on that land you can't plant any trees because we are there provisionally. How long are we going to be temporary? Is there really a guarantee that we will return home? And the government when they give you that land, they don't give you any building support they just give you that part and leave you. Where will you get zinc sheets? You can cut some small bamboos, sticks, and go on fencing. It doesn't work. If you

can afford it, go and buy an agricultural plot with someone for you to produce, but they won't give you a land to produce. I've been there where it's Nanjua which has a space of 1075 plots. 1075, who can fit them in? That, for example, for Mocímboa is just a neighbourhood. Now look, there are 1075 plots for two districts, Mocímboa and Macomia. That's not enough. I went there, I couldn't get it, and I came back. I didn't blame anyone, I just saw that I won't manage in this place, it doesn't work.



**Najila says there are no policies even for government employees who are displaced.**

That is why I say that the government is guilty, I am in the administration, but no support was given by the government. It could say, 'let's host civil servants. Didn't do it, not only for me, but for all the civil servants. At least they could take us to a certain place of the settlement, put us in a tent and say civil servants stay here. But what is happening, everyone is hanging on for themselves. Speaking about support, my brother that I'm referring to was in Education. Since June 2020 I prepared some documents for that death and funeral allowance payment. To this day I still have no response. I took this case to the Administrator and presented it on the 10th of June 2021, but until today, I have no response.



**Sapphire and Wetha do not agree and clearly rip off the common-sense prejudices of men who say that women are being spared in this war. And what do the women say?**

They talk as if this war does not affect women and try to give the impression that women are better protected because they are the ones who leave the conflict zones and manage to get to the safer zones to ask for assistance. We are told that who is effectively being affected are men because we don't even know where they stay and where they are. So, I think women are also very much affected. We are also talking not only about the issue of rape, but also about income, about that whole family that she has to take responsibility for, I think it's a very hard process that women are exposed to in this war.

The war affects women in a different forms and twice as much. Normally not much is said about how women are being targeted, how they are being affected by the war at the level of Cabo Delgado. Even though it is said that they are not direct victims because they don't suffer beheadings, women suffer doubly in this war. They suffer at the hands of the insurgents, and they also suffer at the hands of the military themselves because there are reports that women are sexually abused by both the military and the insurgents and not only women above 18 years of age, but girls are also abused. And when questioned, the military says:

- We left our families, our wives to come and defend you, and how do you think we are going to satisfy ourselves?

According to the United Nations Secretary-General's 2019 report on Women Peace and Security, the situation of women is tragic and little progress has been achieved:

- (1) There is strong evidence that rape and other sexual violence against women are used as weapons of war by more than 50 conflict parties in the world: armies, armed militias, insurgent groups, and others;
- (2) At least one in five refugee or displaced women experience sexual violence and nine out of 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are under contexts affected by armed violence;
- (3) In 2019, almost 132 million people needed humanitarian aid and protection, including about 35 million women and girls who need sexual and reproductive health services and need actions to prevent gender-based violence and address the needs of the survivors;
- (4) In the period 2016 - 2017, only 0.2% of the total bilateral aid mobilized to respond to situations of conflict and armed violence was destined to women's organizations to fragility and conflict;
- (5) Between 1990 and the end of 2018, only 353 out of 1,789 agreements (19.7 percent), related to more than 150 peace processes, included provisions relating to women, girls or gender;
- (6) In 2018, out of 52 agreements only four (7.7 percent) contained gender provisions, against 39 percent in 2015



**Aisha declares that the suffering is for everyone no matter the sex, the age: it is just a matter of being on the warpath.**

Suffering doesn't choose, if it gets you with a baby, they take it from you; they take the baby and go away; if you are not lucky you are killed. There is no suffering from one side only, if they find a woman they cut, if they find a man, they cut to death.





**Layla shares her analysis on the importance of a free social media and on how and why the structural victimization of women in this war is hidden. She points out political reasons that must be considered with full attention.**

I think they know that women are the biggest victims in this situation. I think they are afraid that the information may pass to other countries in the world. In fact, a lot is happening that the media is not revealing and when a woman stands out to speak, she is always cut short, she is frowned upon, or they will cut off the allowance that she was given.

What I am thinking is that maybe they are there, relaxed, not experiencing on their skin what women are suffering. So, the way I see it, we need to sensitize all women to march and ask for the war to end, because we women are the ones who are feeling very much on the skin. So maybe I would suggest that if there was a march of all women to demand or to shout saying enough, the government would listen, but I don't know if there would be space. In my thinking it had to be that.





## THE WAR AND THE NARRATION OF THEIR MANY SUFFERINGS

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Zara talks about one of the episodes that traumatized her the most. They say that women don't want to talk, but it turns out that their heads are full of stories and experiences that they want to share. The war in Cabo Delgado has been bringing into the lives of women and young girls more abuse of their bodies, sexual slavery, and prostitution.

The two girls had gone to the farm field early in the morning and were returning home by road. They saw, from a distance, men sitting in the shade. They were officials that they knew from the village because they were always there. They decided to go forward because they felt safe because those officers were there. One of them needed to go into the bush to relieve herself, but the other girl went forward, walking towards those

men. The one who had stayed behind when she was reaching the road again saw those officers dragging her friend into the bush and heard her screams. Frightened she remained silent and as quiet as possible, very afraid that they would find her. She cried for the rest of the day hidden there. Later she went to look for her friend. She was dead and abandoned in the bush. She had been raped to death by those officers. She was desperate but decided not to report because they are the authorities, but instead of protecting the population they rape, kill and torture. She fled from the village and later told me what happened when I was supporting the refugee girls.



**Aysha talks about the double horror experienced by so many of them: watching their loved ones being killed and then being handed over to die slowly and inexorably with each rape.**

They are really being raped. That's what's happening. It's normal for a lady to be forced to go with four men. We die a lot. I personally lost my brother Timóteo, they took him along with his wife, they took out the documents from my brother and gave to the wife. She is their wife there in the bush, my brother, they beheaded him.



**Hana says that the tents in the hosting camps are neither shelter nor security for the girls, on the contrary.**

One of the people with whom I work with reported five cases of sexual abuse in Metuge which is where we work, but we are still investigating. Cases of sexual violence, for example are still complicated for the victims to talk about, for us to know, but we know that, for sure, it surely happens. With the issue of hunger, of the exposure, the girls are much more exposed. Imagine that 11 people must sleep in a tent. In which conditions? How? Even in those thatched houses that they usually make, they can't guarantee the division of rooms. A one-meter thing is not enough for much.



**Khadjira shares her experience about how women's bodies are not their own, but rather a bargaining coin to be able to eat what they have the right to.**

Life in Montepuez is a bit expensive because of the people who are leaving, and they have no money, no place to sleep, the situation is not good. There is a situation of sexual violation of young girls and women because there are chiefs that don't give until they sleep with them, excuse me for the expression. They are the blocks's chiefs, the neighbourhood's chiefs, the 10 houses's chiefs. Sometimes they talk, but when they talk, they are always afraid; they don't talk openly, but they talk to a relative or activist.



**Zara acknowledges that complicity exists between women and rapists, but traumas do not disappear.**

They don't like to say that they have been raped, it's a shame, it's I don't know what. But there are many rapes going on; There in the bushes many women are raped. There is a woman who lives here in town and each time the girls were kidnapped, she was the one who took care of them: go and take a bath, this one sleep here. The men would come choose one and then she would come back all sad. There were criteria to take the girls: they had to be girls from 14 years old and above and couldn't have more than two children. She said that she controlled 202 girls and then there came a time when they sent her away, but they didn't kill her, and they didn't do anything to her. She says she doesn't want to talk: 'I am living my life, I have already escaped death, leave me!

To achieve peace and gender justice, a work of memory must be done. This means not imposing forgetfulness through policies of oblivion or historical neglect. Rather, it is necessary to allow traumatic memories to express themselves in terms in which they can be healing, can help people process violence and overcoming the option of violence when they have to solve other conflicts.

A work of memory, with a focus on intersectionality, that does not discard the diversity among women. By including them, it contributes to the respect for their human dignity, gives space for self-reflection and exchange of experiences among women and for their healing, and also it widens the possibilities for an entire society to understand their history and learn from it..





**Hana explains that war and scaping have been causing separation of families, abandonment, and orphanhood among children. It is the women who suffer the most from this situation and they tell what they know about it.**

What I have seen, at least in terms of cases with children, is that there are many separated, displaced children because of the process of escaping the armed attacks. I remember some activities we did with them, and the children mostly drew airplanes, drew houses that were destroyed and the process of accompanying the death of their parents. And we are left without understanding whether those airplanes are interpreted in a good sense or in a bad sense. I thought a lot about the girls and their vulnerability. I think about all those children and what they will become in a few years from now, as they have witnessed with their own eyes the sad situations.



**Samira talks about how it is like to lose daughters and sons, one's life, and to witness the terrible mutilation of bodies and of dignity.**

We don't know anything, we are just seeing our children being taken to the bush, we don't know what they do, if they are alive or not there in the bush. They took many children, boys, girls, babies. They take and are not giving them back, no news, we have nothing. We don't know. We know how to describe it, because it's just a matter of entering the bush, someone comes to the field and cuts them. To man, they cut off his sex and to the woman they cut off their sex and breasts.

We cry because we suffer a lot.



**Ranya: I saw war and death.**

I saw the war. I saw them shooting, we saw people killing, cutting. We felt suffering. We heard that they got in there, attacked there. Someone went to the farm field, they got him and killed, and nobody knows where he is. This is how we live.



**Zahara tells how war scatters the family and dissipates hopes.**

What I think is to end this war so I can go back home. Yes, home, because now people are lost, my daughters, my grandchildren, we are like this, scattered.



**Aisha explains what it means to lose everything and have just hope that the waiting will be over.**

We don't have any thoughts; we just live. Here we are just sitting, we have nothing, we are not seeing anything, it will get dawn and we are sitting. I'm waiting for the awaiting to be over. Waiting is not an easy task. It requires attention so that as soon as the awaiting goes away, hope can enter. The war is not ending and the support we are getting is not being enough because it is not every day, so we are asking for effort to be made for this war to end so we can rest.



**Najila talks about how she couldn't take it and had to flee.**

Mocímboa was indeed sad and abandoned. They cheated on us because they brought the military and the military were only drinking beer, they weren't there to defend us. In fact, I stayed until June 2020, but what happened was that the force went from door to door saying that they were looking for evildoers, they were shooting anyhow until 3 am on the 27th. The evildoers entered Mocímboa and started to shoot and the population became scattered. Yes, we no longer knew if they were military or if they were evildoers, after all they were evildoers. When they entered in March they didn't kill so much, but in June there were more than 300 and they were organized. I saw it, I really saw it. In June they killed, they did as they saw fit, and kidnapped many girls. They seemed to have a map because they knew so-and-so is at home; so-and-so is at home and hasn't left. There was a group that came to behead; there was a group that came to recruit population; there was a group to cook. They even have time to cook!





**Ephiro concludes that the intention is to rule by terror.**

They picked a lot of people, a group and when they gathered a group, selected some and took them away and others were given back. The other group they beheaded. And those who were given back home were told: 'it's not worth you being here in Mocímboa, you must leave because we are going to destroy Cabo Delgado.



**Farida explains what it is like to live like this: the escape and displacement cause food shortages and a drastic change in diet that leads to their illness and death.**

I managed to get a 25kg bag of flour, a 25kg bag of rice, spaghetti pasta, washing powder, soap, and oil. It's sad to see people, old and young, abandoning their homes, their possessions, and to be suffering. Because even if the government gives us food support it doesn't help at all. For example, the day before yesterday I had 40 people here at home and another 13 passed through on their way to Chiúre but if they had stopped here at home I would be in a very bad situation. So, the 25 kg of flour that I took has already run out. The war must be stopped so that people can pick up the hoes and go to work.

The victimization of women and girls is perpetrated by all sides. It is not a matter of being on one side or the other of the conflict and war, but about something much deeper that makes the bodies and the reason of women, of all ages, to be seen as a battlefield, a place of macho affirmation, no matter at what cost.



**Samira criticizes the food support policies that, besides being scarce, seem to be quite problematic.**

You go to a normal store and the rice, really good quality rice, is at 1450. But in those identified stores it is 1800. What are we going to get? Is it support? At home we could go to the farm field, at home we knew where to get moringa and other things. The support that we mentioned is support from the government and when, for example, the government here in the city receives support there, in the committee, they divide it among themselves, you who are displaced don't receive it. They are already opening stands, the owners here themselves. In the house where you are in the house where you have been accommodated, the owner of the house doesn't feel satisfied because you are not helping at all. They welcomed you and with this support thing at least we could bind the faces of the owners of the house, but not with this.



**Samira tells how privacy is impossible, and Aiyrá raises the problem of the lack of capulanas because they represent being able to maintain dignity for women on many occasions.**

We had to leave our capulanas and here they don't give us capulanas. How are we going to do it? We feel lost without the capulana. With the capulana we give birth, carry our children, cover our legs, go to the bush to do our needs without anyone being able to see, it is our mat and protects us from mosquitoes, ants, and snake bites. Without the capulanas we feel naked and helpless. On those days of the month what can we do without the capulanas? We get dirty and have to sit in the bush and stay there the whole day.

The women were giving birth still at sea, with no conditions and when they arrive, they are offered a basic hygiene kit which is soap. I think it is something that will not satisfy the needs of women even talking about the accommodation itself. In each tent two families are placed. One tent for two families, so I don't see any space here to guarantee the privacy of a woman inside a tent. There are no toilets for women. Toilets for women are something I don't have information about, I haven't had access to. Many people that are being hosted at the Cabo Delgado level are being hosted within vulnerable families. So, if they are being sheltered within vulnerable families, I don't see any space here to guarantee the care for these women in a precarious house with 30 people.



**Ayra explains that the war is taking away their fields, their access to water, firewood, fish, to natural medicine, which has serious impacts on their survival and that of their families.**

I think it makes a lot of difference. We are saying that we have lost the only source that used to give us autonomy. So, I think this is an additional exposure of this woman towards those people who should have respect for her. So, I think it's something that will expose women more to risk. They are giving a piece of land of 10m by 15m or 15m by 15m. So how are you giving 10m by 15m land areas to people whose source of income is agriculture? What do you think you are doing with these people. Besides having the land as their income, it's the environment that saw them grow up and many of these people never left, they were born and grew up on those lands. So, they have to disconnect from that environment in order to start their lives elsewhere. This is hell!



**Hana makes her analysis of the situation in the hosting camps, which are places of reaffirmation of masculinities that think of themselves as superior and owners of privileges, however few they may be.**

The impression I had when I first visited that camp in Metuge, I think it holds ten thousand people and must have 1 or 2 water access points. It is huge and I was left with the perception that Cabo Delgado was not part of Mozambique. My first impression was whether we had a state that looks after their own, because it didn't seem like that. Those people have no water, must not have bathed for centuries; they don't have clothes; most of the children walk around dirty. I am concerned about the issue of hygiene for women, the question of how it is, for example, to manage menstruation in that context with such precarious sanitary conditions. Besides, you see a group of men sitting in a certain place and whenever you are passing through the camp you will always see women cooking, working, looking after the children and the men are sitting among themselves chatting, sometimes smoking. In that environment there is always an improvised way of praising masculinities.





## SAPPHIRE EXPLAINS HOW THEY DON'T EVEN HAVE ACCESS TO HERBS

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Before, it was easy to find what we needed to attend and treat our sick ones. Today there are many diseases and new diseases because the extractive industry is violating our woods and forests. We have a lot of knowledge that comes from the time of our grandmothers, but nobody calls us to contribute and help now with the pandemic. But today with the war they take off our bushes and we can no longer find the herbs and roots we need; they broke our pots and our pharmacies. We are without anything. How are we going to do if our mother gets sick? They don't want to listen to us, this war, and this government!



**Zaia talks about the lack of water and how are the women that have to face this problem every day.**

In the case of Montepuez there is no water either; water has to be bought. With the arrival of these people my day has been very hectic and busy. As soon as I wake up, I go to collect water that is on sale, 20 litres cost two meticaïs and fifty cents and per day I've been spending 80 meticaïs. For example, this morning I bought water worth 40 meticaïs, and this afternoon I've received more people and I must buy more water. But we suffer a lot with the lack of water. Here in my house water doesn't come out, there where we buy water, I must get up at 4 o'clock in the morning because it's very crowded.



**Zaia tells us about one of the things that is rarely talked about: the extreme workload of women to ensure the daily lives of their families and the families they take in. On the other hand, it is also not mentioned that, among all these jobs, are those of emotional support, psychological care and ongoing resolution of conflicts that naturally arise in these situations of extreme vulnerability.**

At first, I received 38 people. Today I received 15 more people. In total we are 25 people now, but some say they are passing through because they are going to Nampula. Some are my relatives; some are acquaintances of my relatives, and they don't have a place to stay that's why I am receiving them. Here at home, I received 3 men, 4 boys, the rest are teenage girls and ladies, which are the majority, and an elderly woman who is my mother.

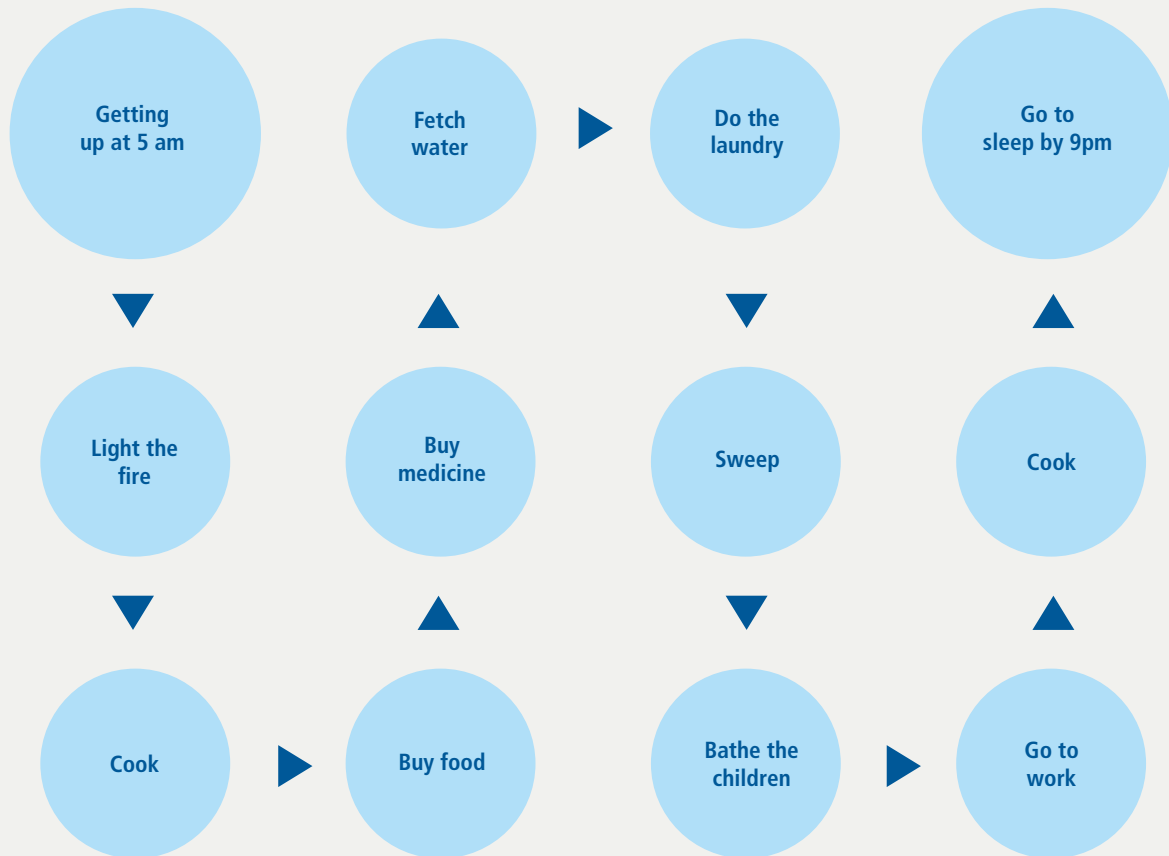
With the arrival of the people my life has changed, I feel a lot of difference and difficulty to feed these people, there is no place to sleep as well. I have been going to the city two or three times a day to receive these people. Without transportation it is very difficult for me, but people are suffering a lot because of this war. After resolving the issue of water, I go in search of food. To eat I have been making groups of men, children, and women and I serve them on platters. There are two meals a day, the first meal has been at 11am and the second and last meal has been at 4pm. We suffer a lot from the lack of water.



**Zuri talks about how long, hard and complex the days are for the women who have taken on the responsibility of receiving relatives who have fled and sought refuge in their homes.**

In all there are: my mother, a niece, Mariamo, my sister and her husband, my uncle, my aunt, and her son, besides me and my husband and 5 children. When my mother came, I went to the authorities, once they mentioned that: 'when you host someone, bring to the neighbourhood headquarters'. I took my mother countless times. Because they had said 'we won't give much, but at least to watch and see how they are living', 'Who is their responsible family member?' I said, 'it's me, the hospital I'm responsible, water, food, bread, sleep. Everything is me.'

I had to run just to go and buy some pills because she has an issue with diarrhea and vomiting. I bought pills and they were already calling me to at least buy fruit to have salts or a vitamin for her body since she vomited a lot and is already a bit weak. Fear isn't lacking.



I wake up at 5am and have to wake up that Mariamo, that came with my mother. She sweeps outside and I sweep inside. Since she is a little girl, I can't overburden her with the house chores. I help fetching water because we don't have tap water. Every day we buy water for 60 and it's not enough; in the morning I only buy water of 30 and in the afternoon when I come back the water is finished, I have to go and buy water of 30, to get through the night.

I carry water of 30 while she sweeps. Then that kid, my aunt's second son washes the dishes. After fetching water, I sweep inside, light the fire, I make porridge and give it to my son. Before I give porridge, I bathe him, dress him, feed him, let him play, wash the clothes that he had dressed, and hang it up. Then I tell the girl: put water on the fire. I adopted a strategy of buying flour to make porridge instead of tea so that I won't have to buy sugar.

So, by the time I am preparing myself to go to work I send someone out to buy bread, they make porridge and divide it. After I see that everything is ok, each one at least guaranteed breakfast, that's where I have to get dressed and come running here. I have never had breakfast I can't lie. I come to the work.

I go until 3pm, but when work is very hard, I go until 4pm, 5pm. At 6pm I must run a little to go back home and see if there is lunch because we don't eat lunch, to tell you the truth. With the demand I have I can't make lunch and dinner.



Practically the barn ends very early before the salary because I only depend on the salary, I don't have these small businesses of the day. So, I have adopted a method: they have breakfast late by 9am or 10am. Then they play until more or less 3 pm. At 4 pm they start lighting the fire, see where there is curry and where there is rice, so that they can bathe the children until 5 p.m. They bathe, serve, and eat, and then they sleep.

There is nowhere to sleep, to tell you the truth. The house has three bedrooms and a living room. I and the second and third of my sister sleep in my room. When my mother comes, there is an aunt of mine who saw me growing up and who is very attached to me, and I went to talk with her: 'since you have been friends with mother, and I don't have space'. So, I asked that aunt, and she started sleeping with my mom. She does her homework or monitors the family until 8 p.m. and then she leaves and goes to sleep until 5 a.m. she is already up. Then the rest of us who stay there are tarps and mats. My twins sleep with me.



**Zuri was married to a military man who died in the theatre of operations in Cabo Delgado in June 2021. This is how she told Wezu everything about the base where it all happened.**

They asked for reinforcements, it was 5pm. By then the office was already closed and the answer on the other side of the phone was: 'I'll pass the message on, they'll be here by morning'. They lay back on their mats, their hearts tightening and squeezing themselves in the nightmares that the night can bring. It took time for that night to pass. Even the dry leaves of the bush that flew with the breezes and the silences interrupted by the light whistles of the night, made the hearts tight against the mats accelerate. But then came the clear morning and, before it, the purple and pink dawn of a sun that insisted on rising. A sigh: 'it is already morning, after all, the night has passed. Let's form up at the parade and then go out in groups to collect evidence.

At the collective salute, a brutal, fatal bang was heard. Out of 37 only 5 survived that after two days also died because the office was still closed and on the other side of the phone the message was still on its way.





## STORIES OF ESCAPE, DANGER, FEAR, AND OF BRAVERY TO FACE IT ALL

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**Amina tells how her escape was.**

I come from Mocímboa. I have 5 months here and I am with my 5 children. We left where we lived and went to a village called Unidade. In Unidade they burned it down, we left Unidade and stayed two or three weeks in the bush. We went to a village called Ntonga from where we then left and went to Mueda on foot. It was a whole day, yes because it is a very long distance. From Mueda we caught a car to Montepuez and from Montepuez we managed to get here. We didn't come by boat. We ran away and then we got a car. At that time, it cost a lot of money, for example, for three people we could pay 10,000.



### **Namphela traveled by boat from Mocímboa da Praia to Pemba.**

We came here because of the war; we came by speedboat. I am from Mocímboa, so we left from Mocímboa to here. We came straight from Mocímboa to Mifunvo. Mifunvo is Quissanga, it's an island from Quissanga. Before Ibo its Mifunvo, then Quirimbas and Ibo. It got late at night inside the boat and at dawn we left. There were a lot of people, we were relatives and other people. Most were children and women. I didn't pay, it was a family's speedboat, they transported women and children, the men stayed there.



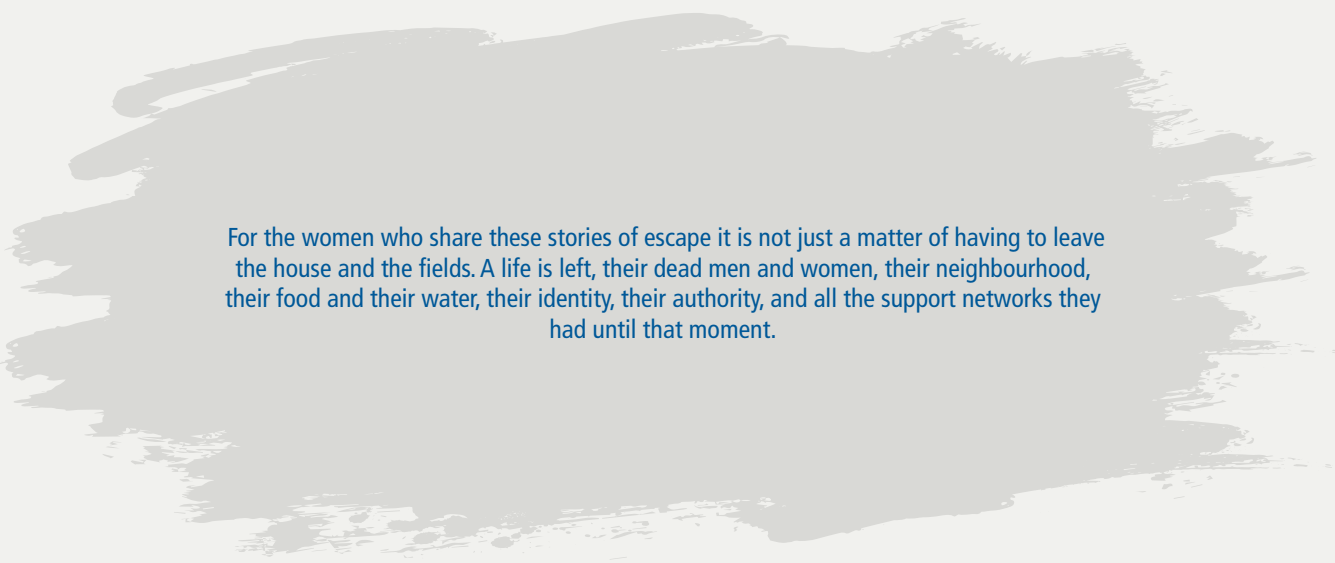
### **Aziza tells how people get scattered, out there, without roots.**

I lived in the village of Namanje. Before the war I was well in the farm field and the children at the beach. I had my house that they also burnt down. But after that my life turned into hell. We wanted to go to Metuge by car, but we didn't make it. So, when they started burning, we couldn't get through that road to Metuge anymore. We went to Mifunvo. Then from Mifunvo, since we don't have a speedboat, the little we had we had to pay because each adult person is 500 meticaís, a child 100. A lot of people came, neighbours, and everyone we met, but now we are scattered. Some are in Nogane.



### **Zuri talks about how her mother became a widow and how Mariamo came into her life.**

After the attacks on our village my mother did not want to take refuge here. First, she ran to another village in Mocímboa. At the time she had a husband, my stepfather. When they attacked Mocímboa with all those shootings, that stepfather died in that shootout, in that dum dum dum, his heart couldn't take it and he died. Then when they were about to arrive at my mother's house, she tried to help her husband before he died: 'come on!' but he said: 'no, I can't take this heart attack, it's painful for me. God willing, I will stay alive, and you will find me, and if they burn while I am here, I will thank God'. My mother ran and left him there. And those attacked the house. It is not known if he died of a heart attack or if they killed him because they did not set the house on fire. It was only after the people came back that they found him dead. He wasn't hurt or anything. So, from there she started to look where she could run to. She called me: 'Daughter, I'm in this situation. I said OK. At that time there was a cousin, her uncle's son, her brother, who was working in Mueda as a nurse. I spoke to that cousin: 'cousin, I am far away, and I don't have credit at Mpesa, and now that they attacked, I won't be able to send it. I'm asking you, if you have money, take mum to your house in Mueda and then you get her through that Montepuez via so she can come here'. He didn't deny it, he helped called her and said: 'get in the car to Mueda'. She got in and he paid at the arrival. She stayed there for 5 days. Then they attacked Muidumbe which is close to Mueda, and she didn't calm down. She said: 'I must leave because what I saw there, I think is following me up to here. My cousin rented a car put their goods in it and they brought my mother up to here. When my mother ran from Mocímboa a poor family, that had no way to run with their children, gave my mother a daughter and said: 'since you have a daughter that at least up to now is supporting you, we are asking you to take this daughter of ours because we no longer have where to run to because we don't have other relatives that can push us along. My mother brought that 13-year-old girl.



For the women who share these stories of escape it is not just a matter of having to leave the house and the fields. A life is left, their dead men and women, their neighbourhood, their food and their water, their identity, their authority, and all the support networks they had until that moment.



**Najila flees and returns to Mocímboa and flees again. The family scatters itself and life gets complicated. Running away is always a tragedy.**

I left Mocímboa on the 25th, they attacked on the 23rd in Mocímboa, I stayed on the 23rd until 3 p.m. and I couldn't take it because I was right on the edge of the barracks. So, I was seeing them with the naked eye. I couldn't take it anymore; I was locked inside the house. Then at 3 o'clock they started burning cars. So, when they came to attack, at that time they started burning cars, we thought they were burning houses. We ended up leaving and I left for a neighbourhood called 30 de Junho to my second-last brother's house. On the 25th I left, but it wasn't easy to leave. The owners who had cars were charging 1000 meticaís from Mocímboa to Mueda. I got a car because I have a son who is in Mueda. I spoke to him, and he managed to bring a car from Mueda to Mocímboa. We only got out ourselves, the family, we couldn't carry anything and for a family to get out, it cost 16,000 to pay for a car without accepting luggage. We left Mocímboa and arrived in Mueda, I slept in Mueda 26 and 27 and I left because it wasn't safe. There, in Mueda, it was very sad, children walking alone. I arrived here in Pemba 27 March. From Mueda to Montepuez each head was 1,000 meticaís; from Montepuez to here, it was 225 each person.

When we came here, we were more than 10 people, but we are already separated because we don't have residences. For example, my paternal aunt, my father's sister, took me. There is me, my daughter-in-law and three daughters of mine, we are in that family. My older sister is renting a house with three sons; her daughter is in other neighbourhood with four daughters; my mother is here in Natite with two sisters of mine plus three of my sister's daughters. So, we are scattered like this.



It is important to be aware that in the current configuration of decision-making and negotiations aimed at ending conflicts, women will always be few because there is no effective political will to include them.

Therefore, we must invest more time and more resources to multiply the peacebuilding instances at the continental, regional, national, and local level where they can and want to participate. Women do not have to wait to be invited to peace negotiations, as they have always been at the forefront of reconciliation processes and carrying out micro-policies of peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In this way, women exercise their agency not only by participating in different social spaces and, thus can transform both structures and outcomes. This means that women, in their diversity, must be recognized as indispensable protagonists of peacebuilding at both formal and informal levels; at local, as well as regional, national, and continental levels.





## THE DEEP ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT: THE NATURALIZATION OF VIOLENCE, THAT WHICH IS SUFFERED AND THAT WHICH IS PRACTICED

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**Dada, who fought in the 'theatre of operations' in Cabo Delgado shared her analysis of what is happening. In a war women are certainly not the majority of the fighters, but some are also perpetrators of violence.**

I was in the theatre of operations in Cabo Delgado in 2019 where I was injured in combat. What is happening in CD and the action of the FAM, the war looks like a joke. The government doesn't respect the men and women who are there defending their country.

For us who are fighting it is a war of trenches using circular trenches with the command in the middle. Women and men are in the trenches and to fight they give us an AK with 3 chargers that last an hour at most, while the fighting usually



takes place between 10 pm and 4 am which puts the soldiers in an unsustainable and highly dangerous situation. Among the military it is said that the government is sending us to the slaughterhouse. The trainings of new recruits are, at most 2 months, largely insufficient; the weapons are old, and many don't even work; the salaries are 3000 meticaís, and many times take weeks to be paid; sometimes they are not paid at all. Many times, there is no food for the soldiers for a week or more.

I know there are many desertions. There are two forms of desertion. The first is on the way to the theatre of operations by land. From Inhassoro, many ask to stop the trucks that they are being transported on so that they can relieve themselves and disappear into the bush. They carry civilians' clothes in hiding. The other is when they are contacted by insurgents who offer them money to desert. They may offer up to 150,000 MT of salary and the soldiers desert and join the ranks of the insurgents. They take uniforms and weapons. So, in my opinion, that video of the murder of that lady in early September was made by soldiers who deserted.

When a comrade dies in combat and the body is not recovered by the FAM the insurgents take out the dead person's uniform and use it, same if any weapons or ammunition were left. The only thing they don't take is the boots. They fight in sneakers and that is the difference. We all know that deserting soldiers and insurgents wear military uniforms over civil clothes so that, if necessary, they can undress quickly and blend in with the population.

We military women also suffer a lot. There is a lot of sexual harassment against military women by their male comrades. There's blackmailing: 'If you don't want to go to fight, you'll have to lie down with me'. There are also many women who are obliged by insurgents to prostitute themselves and denounce the FAM soldiers who seek them out. Many casualties among the FAM are a result of such denunciations.

There are two classes of soldiers going into the theatre of operations. The first group is made up of poorly trained poorly uniformed boys and girls who travel in trucks by land (two days and two nights) and starve, have no ammunition, do not even receive their salary, and are sent to fight hungry and without rest; the second is composed of well-prepared soldiers with good weapons and ammunition, well fed, who travel with the military commanders by plane and are sent to secure the mega-projects in Afungi Bay.

We are all sisters and brothers, we soldier and insurgents, and that is our great tragedy.

**There is very little confirmed news about what is happening on the side of the insurgent forces especially about the role of women in the fighting. Yet some information circulates repeatedly. It makes one wonder about the complexity of their position in the war. Some of these were told by Yasu.**

In a village that was being attacked, a motorcycle was seen carrying a woman on its back, carrying shells with which she was ammunitioning the man who sat in the middle and who was firing while another man was driving the motorcycle in the middle of the battle. In fact, many women in Mocímboa were convinced. There were many women there, but those women mainly were there in the defence. As they say: woman is medicine. It is normal to see a naked woman only with beads. That's just drugs to distract the people and when they enter only by listening Allahu Akbar that neither the population nor the police shoots, they lose strength in the joints. They are put in front and use some traditional botanical drugs. It is with these drugs that people are unable to react.



WE ALL WANT PEACE AND WE KNOW THAT PEACE WILL TAKE A LOT OF WORK TO ACHIEVE. BUT IT IS URGENT AND DESIRED FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS

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**Sapphire explains that peace is no easy task.**

Building peace in Cabo Delgado is not an easy task; building peace in Mozambique is not an easy task. We came out of the armed conflict against Portuguese colonialism, it was ten years of struggle. Then we continued with conflict to achieve democracy. We are facing a conflict that every Mozambican society, every population seems not to know where it comes from, we don't know what the characteristics are, what the real motivation is. This, in one way or another, contributes to insecurity, to destabilization, to the lack of confidence in our country, and particular in our province. It needs work, it needs work. It is what my companion was saying that for us to have that peace, happiness needs, first of all, unity between the parties and start a dialogue between the general population and our military.



**Abida calls for civil society disquietness, dialogue, and the mobilisation of everyone to end the conflict.**

I think it is necessary that we take every opportunity that is presented to us and try to establish a dialogue and reach a consensus. The whole civil society has to come out of the offices, let's come out of hiding and let's help the people, come out of this quiet. So, the civil society has to spread the laws more, these ideas with lectures, trainings, working more with the young people. We can achieve the cohesion that we need. To restore peace in Cabo Delgado we have to go to each district, to each locality to explain that they cannot go to these places where these insurgents are burning or doing things that are no good. We are asking them not to accept to go to those places.



**Yasu alerts to the combination of factors that must be taken into consideration to achieve peace, and stresses that what is really sustainable is to reduce vulnerabilities and must always be thought of and done from the bottom-up, and with the participation of the population.**

I think that it's necessary a combination of several actions because we really need to understand what is happening with this silent war in Cabo Delgado. Why isn't this war being brought to an end? It must be a job that has to be done at the grassroot level, understanding what goes on inside people themselves: why is this happening, after all? What should be done to support you? I think that the population must have a say to improve the situation.

Inequalities are something that cannot be solved from today to tomorrow, but it is an issue that must be taken into account to see if, at the very least, the vulnerability of these people is reduced. We need to create conditions to reduce inequalities; we need to create conditions so that people don't feel excluded, so that they participate more, so that they are the ones who create the changes in their lives. And to create change they must be given the autonomy to do so. Things should not come from the top-down, they should come from the bottom-up. The population must participate and must be the ones to suggest what they think should be done to improve their lives. So, I think that it is this combination of various factors that can improve the situation in Cabo Delgado.





**Zara also develops the idea of true unity as a condition for peace.**

It is necessary that people feel that although I am Maxangana, I am Makonde, I am Makua, I have an equal opportunity to participate in the development process of my locality. This is also an issue that is omitted, but it makes a lot of difference. Our political discourses are unifying, but the reality doesn't show this, and you feel it in the little things. So, we also need, at the macro level, to think about this issue a little bit: our discourses should be sheets of paper; they should be reality starting with the head of the neighbourhood and the head of the locality. We have a discourse, and we have a practice that does not correspond with it. This is what we have seen.



**Dada is peremptory: peace cannot be achieved with more violence.**

We know there is a need for military intervention because there is an attack on going and we need to protect those people; that makes sense. But looking at this military presence, in the sense, that it is in this manner that we are going to solve the situation in Cabo Delgado, I would not put much faith in it. The military presence is only to protect the population at that moment. It does not solve.



## EPILOGUE

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The journey has been long and as heavy as the heat. Our main job is to never lose heart, but you can't forget what in every second is tearing away the thin skin of hope. Wezu took me to a breathtakingly beautiful beach. I had been thoughtful and worried. Adia her neighbour every night cries and can't find sleep. She says it is because her husband does not consider her. Her other neighbour, Aquina, also can't stop crying because there aren't even any worms left on the beach to make a curry. The rocks are dead, dead, dead, just rocks. The sea returns the dead seaweed and all sorts of dead whelks and shells. Wezu confided me that in one of these early mornings she decided it was time to visit her friend the seawater snake and wait for the sun. The sun was already at its peak and the sea snake was not up for conversation after all. Sister, I buried my feet in the fine sand of the beach to push my cries out to the open sea where the troops don't let anyone fish. You see, you die on the beach, the beach dies, and the sea has been closed. Wezu looked deep into my eyes again when she said that not even the wind took her sadness away. It stayed.

But we promised to each other, Adia, Aquina, Abida, Aisha, Aiyra, Amal, Amina, Dada, Ephiro, Farida, Hana, Khadjira, Layla, Nadjila, Namphela, Ranya, Safira, Samira, Sucena, Wetha, Wezu, Yasu, Zahara, Zaia, Zara, and Zuri that we will never give up on Peace and make our voices heard.



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