Data on Citizens' Concerns in Mozambique

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Introduction

Everywhere in the world, citizens have political, social and economic concerns that they would like their governments or political parties to take into consideration. Some may want their governments or parties to unify a country that was divided in the past; some may want restrictive measures for gun control; some may want border control measures to reduce immigration; some may want poverty reduction or improvement in public services such as drinking water, health, education etc.; and so on. But how do we capture these concerns?

Some may say that a public opinion survey which uses a nationally representative multi-stratified probability sample can provide a picture of citizens concerns. Whilst this should not be underestimated, this Research Note examines this assumption in more detail. For example, although the findings from a nationally representative multi-stratified probability sample can be generalized to the entire population from where the sample was drawn, there are other considerations that need to be taken into account such as how the survey questions were designed and what survey instrument and methodology are being used. As demonstrated later in this Note, some questions can end up being too simplistic for the issue(s) being investigated even in a context where the overall sample survey design is very good.

The purpose of this Research Note is to review how data on citizens' concerns has been captured in Mozambique and what it can tell us. This type of analysis is relevant for policy makers as it will raise awareness of the strengths and or weaknesses of survey data that they may rely on for policy intervention.

Data on Citizens Concerns in Mozambique

In Mozambique, there are at least two sources of data that provide information about citizens' concerns. One is from Afrobarometer which is a pan-African series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, and society.[2] The Afrobarometer has been using nationally representative multi-stratified probability random samples to conduct public opinion surveys of adult individuals on the quality of democracy and governance in Mozambique since 2002 with subsequent surveys being conducted in 2005, 2008, 2012 and 2015.[3] Besides democracy, the survey includes many questions on societal issues. With respect to citizens' concerns, it has asked in all five surveys to date the following question:

"In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that the government should address?"
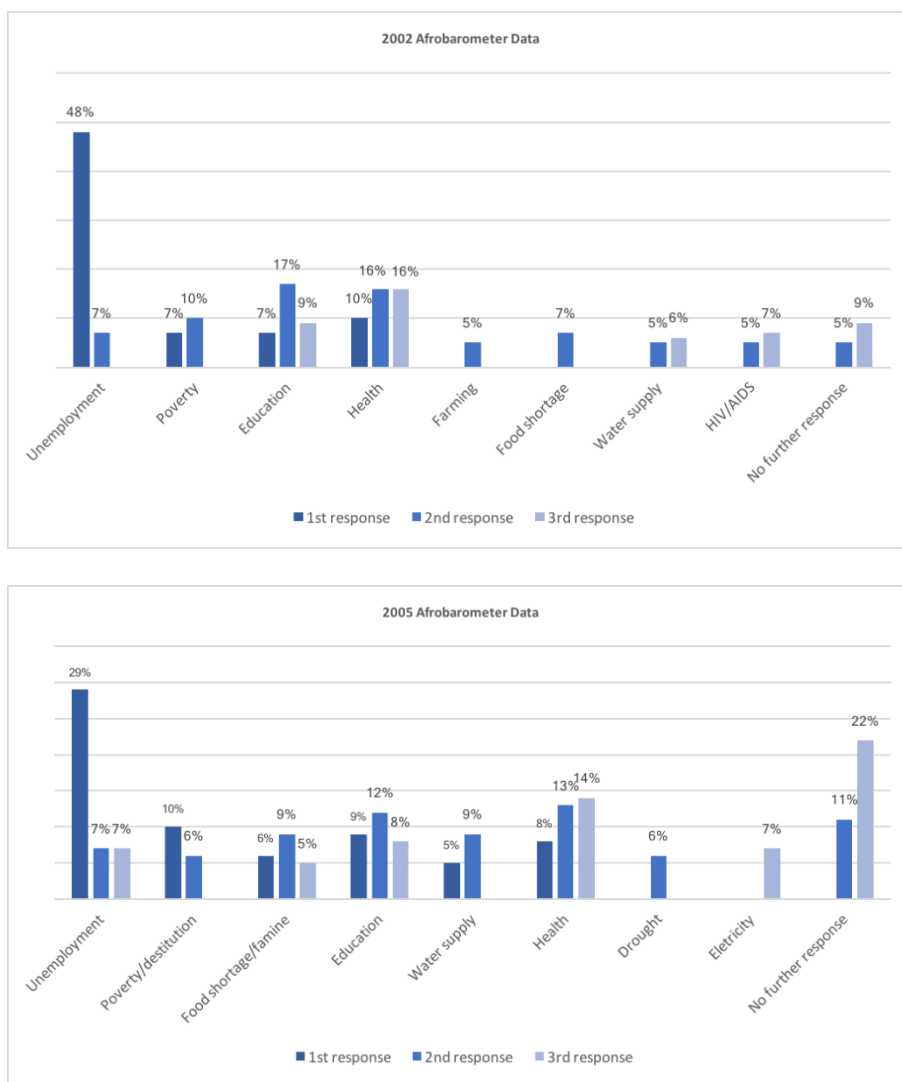
In all years, respondents were asked the same question three times. They were asked to provide their first, second and third responses. In all Afrobarometer surveys the results in Figure 1-5 show that the first most important problem that the government should consider is unemployment. About half (48 percent) of respondents expressed that unemployment was the first most important concern that the government should address in 2002, with 29 percent

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2 www.afrobaromter.org
3 Afrobarometer samples are multi-stratified according to gender, rural-urban residential location and region; and includes all provinces.

saying the same in 2005; 20 percent in 2008; 22 percent in 2012; and 28 percent in 2015. With exception to 2002 and 2015, in all other years that the survey was conducted, citizen's concerns about unemployment also appear to be mentioned significantly in the subsequent responses.[4]
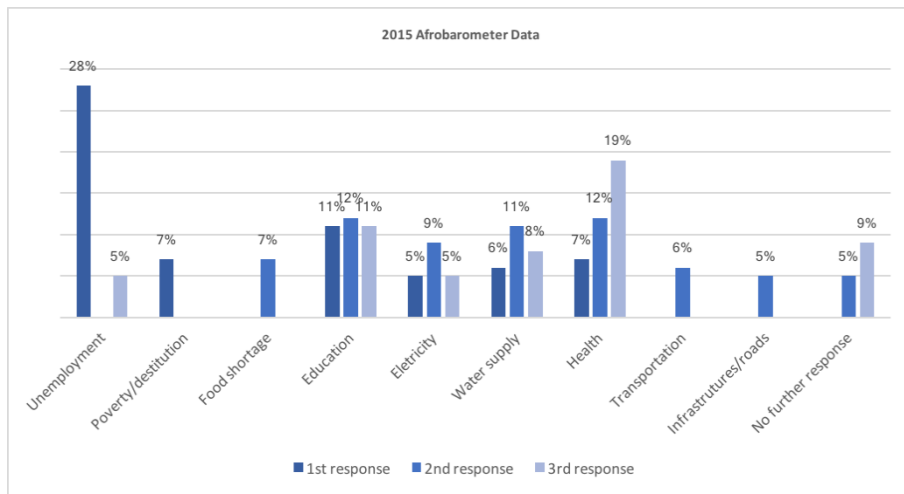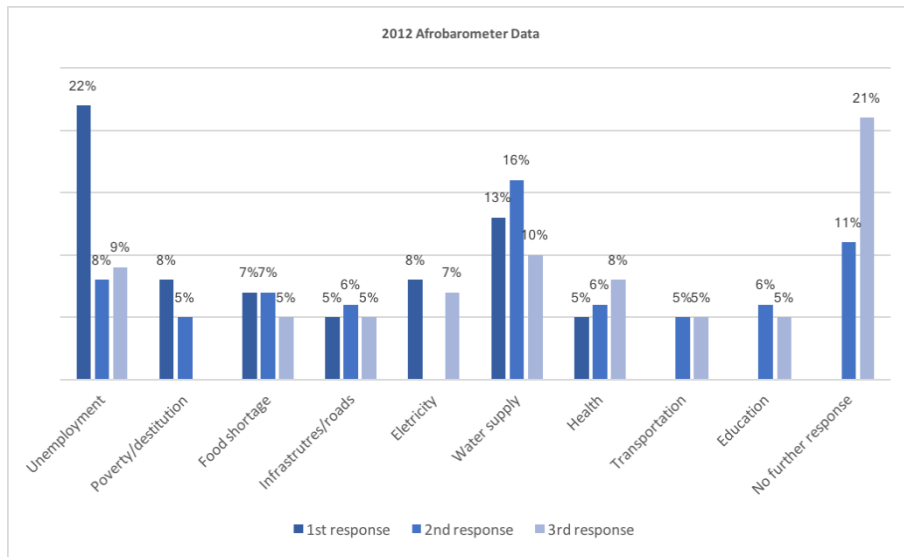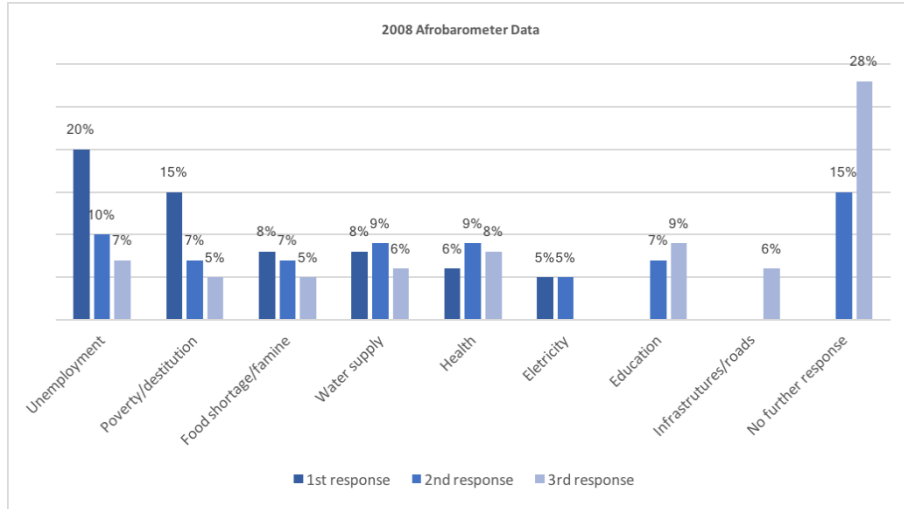
Figure 1-5: Citizens' Concerns in Mozambique by Afrobarometer, 2002-2015[5]

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4 ¹In 2002, unemployment was not mentioned significantly in the third response; and in 2015 it was not mentioned as the second response. By comparing the 2015 Afrobarometer data on citizens' concerns in Mozambique, one can view that the data from the Afrobarometer Summary of Results by Ipsos Mozambique Ltd. (2016:37-39) does not match with the one from the dataset. This Research Note relied from the data in the dataset.

5 *Source: www.afrobarometer.org*

Note: With exception to 2002 and 2015 that used data from datasets, all other years rely on data from the Summary of Results of Afrobarometer surveys in Mozambique. For the first one there is no Summary of Results and for the second, the Summary of Results is not reliable. Sample size varied from 1198 to 2400 adult individuals (2002 N=1400; 2005 N=1198; 2008 N=1200; 2012 N=2400; 2015 N=2400). Responses below the level of 5 percent were not reported as they are not significant.

2008 Afrobarometer Data

2012 Afrobarometer Data

2015 Afrobarometer Data

A second data source providing information on citizens' concerns in Mozambique is a research study commissioned by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and conducted by the Centre for Research on Governance and Development (CPGD) in October and November 2017 (NDI and CPGD 2018). This survey unpacked the above Afrobarometer question into six sub questions (citizen's concerns in relation to political, economic, health, agricultural, infrastructure and public service issues). It used a nationally representative multi-stratified probability random sample of 30 focus groups[6] to ask focus groups participants the following questions:

"What are the main issues you as Mozambique citizens have with respect to the country's politics? Why do you say this is an issue?[7] How should political parties address these issues in their 2019 election campaign?[8] Thinking of all political issues that you mentioned in this country and how parties should address them, can you rank them to identify which is the 1st most important issue that parties should address in the 2019 election; and then the 2nd and 3rd one?"[9]

First, when asked *what* are the main issues Mozambican citizens have with respect to the country's politics, they responded that political instability; crime and security; corruption; and inequalities are the most important concerns (see Table 1).

Second, when asked *why* they think these concerns are an issue, for the first ranked issue of political instability, they said it setback the country by destroying social and economic infrastructures, preventing individuals from doing their daily business, and causing deaths, for example:

> "It prevents people to come to Catandica [District] to buy agricultural products. It prevents people to circulate freely within the country. It reduces the number of vehicles available to transport people and goods. It discourages people from farming and living. It destroys infrastructures and people do not live peacefully."

> "War kills people. A few years ago, Mozambicans lost their loved ones. Many could not transport their goods fearing war. There will be no improvement with war; people will not be able to build their houses. In Gorongosa district, people ended up with no houses and food to eat due to political instability."

> "With war we saw vehicles being attacked and innocent lives being taken. People are living with fear and insecurity of war. War is a problem because it takes lives, destroys infrastructures and burn houses."

> "War takes us from the tranquility of going to farm, school, work and places. There will be no development with war" (NDI and CPGD 2018:4-5).

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6 The sample was multi-stratified according to province, rural-urban residential location, gender and age groups (young adults and older adults). The survey took place in all provinces excepting Tete.

7 For each issue focus groups participants mentioned, this question was asked. If there were five issues mentioned then this question was asked five times.

8 Instead of focusing on government, this study was oriented with the aim of informing electoral manifestos and campaigns of political parties for the 2019 general election.

9 The same questions were asked with respect to the country's economics; health; agriculture; infrastructure; and public services.

Table 1: Citizens' Concerns in Mozambique by NDI/CPGD, 2017

Clusters of concerns	Concerns	No of times concern was mentioned
Political issues	Political instability/war/peace	14
	Crime and security	7
	Corruption	6
	Inequalities	5 (2nd response)
Economic affairs	Unemployment	20
	Low salaries	8 (2nd response)
	Access to loans	5 (2nd response)
	Poverty	5 (3rd response)
Health	Lack of medicines	9
	Poor service	7
	Corruption in hospitals	6 (3rd response)
	Lack of hospitals	5 (3rd response)
Agriculture	Lack of equipment, tools and seeds	9
	Lack of agriculture market	6
	Access to land	4
	Low agriculture prices	6 (2nd response)
	Hunger/malnutrition	5 (2nd response)
Infrastructures	Quality of roads and bridges	15
	Transportation	7
	Communication	5 (3rd response)
Public services	Access to drinking water	21
	Access to electricity	5
	Education	12 (2nd and 3rd most important concern)

Source: NDI and CPGD *(2018) Political and Socio-Economic Perspectives of Mozambican Citizens. Findings from 30 Focus Group Discussions.*

Reported figures refer to the first (1st) most important concern. If they are 2nd and 3rd most important concerns, then they are indicated in parenthesis. Issues that were mentioned less than 5 times are not reported here. N=30 focus groups each involving between 6 and 15 individuals. 301 individuals participated in total.

Third, when asked *how* parties should address political instability in their manifestos for the 2019 election, they said that they should:

- Institute debates and dialogue between political parties to resolve the problems of political instability and peace;
- Set an example in the next campaign by not being provoked and respecting differences;
- Ensure continuous operation of a roundtable of parties;
- Respect the ideas and opinions of other and minority parties (especially important for the ruling party);
- Recruit suitable young people who can bring peace into the armed forces and police; and
- Accept the elections results and do not raise conflicts.

More specifically, they said as follows:

"To solve the problem of war and political tension there should be communication and dialogue between political parties and the government. They have to stop thinking about themselves and start thinking of the people."

> "The parties need to have mutual respect to one another and they need to be engaged in dialogue and reach consensus to resolve the problem of political instability and peace."

> "Parties must conform to multi-partyism. They must have regular dialogue and they must accept differences, recognize differences and tolerate differences."

> "Political parties should accept election results, who won and who lost, and for the ones who missed out they should wait for new elections rather than raising conflicts" (NDI and CPGD 2018:9).

Fourth, when asked *how* Mozambican citizens rank the political issues they have mentioned, they ranked political instability as the first most important concern, with 14 focus groups mentioning it out of 30; crime and security as the second most important concern, with 7 focus groups mentioning it out of 30; and corruption as the third most important, with 6 mentions out of 30 groups (see Table 1).

These four questions were asked for the other important concerns on political issues that Mozambican citizens mentioned, namely: crime and security; corruption; and inequality. The same also occurred with respect to issues raised regarding: economics, health, agriculture, infrastructure and public services.

For economic affairs, the first most important concern that Mozambican citizens raised is unemployment (Table 1). The reasons given by citizens to state that unemployment is their most important economic concern is that they make many sacrifices (often financial) to try to secure jobs, such as investing in education, but that this does not result in employment. They also associate unemployment with crime, migration, recruitment of external labour and corruption:

> "People finish their studies but end up not finding a job. They invest a lot of money to educate their children but later on their children do not get jobs. I am a widow; my husband passed away in 2003 and I made an effort to educate my son; he finished high school but cannot find a job; I am also unemployed. This is really difficult after the money I saved to educate him."

> "Unemployment makes youth to develop negative attitudes. They end up thinking not to go to school because they will not find a job because jobs do not exist. I have a cousin that has a degree in civil engineering and cannot find a job. Some end up stealing, some prostitute themselves. Lack of jobs is now leading to corruption because to have a job you have to have money to bribe."

> "Instead of recruiting locally, companies that operate here contract their work force from locations outside of here. Even accessing jobs from small projects is very difficult. People are recruited from far away to come and work here. There was a project to rehabilitate the dam on the Incomati river but people from the community did not get the jobs."

With respect to health issues, the most important concerns that Mozambicans have are lack of medicines, poor services, corruption in hospitals, and lack of hospitals (Table 1). When asked why the lack of medicines is their concerns, they expressed that public pharmacies lack even basic medicines, including critical malaria medications. Some blame that on corruption among health workers who they claimed steal the medicines and sell them in the private market.

> "Lack of medication is a concern because people go to the hospital, and certain drugs are prescribed and when they go to the pharmacy they are often not available."

> "Lack of medicines, especially malaria medicines, make it difficult for the work of health professionals because even if they assist us we do not get well."

> "Public pharmacies only have paracetamol. Other medicines are only found in private pharmacies but they are very expensive there. The lack of medicines in hospitals worries us a lot because not all citizens are able to buy drugs in private pharmacies."

> "Some health professionals steal medicines making them not being available in hospitals. They then sell them in the black market at more expensive prices" (NDI and CPGD 2018:19).

Respondents in focus groups discussions mentioned that the lack of medicines should be addressed by political parties in the 2019 election by implementing greater oversight to control medicine supplies; better monitor the medicines that are sold in the markets; and ensuring reserve drugs are in hospitals for all types of illnesses, not just paracetamol.

> "There should be entry and exit controls of medications in hospitals. All employees should be checked for medicines at the entrances and exits of the hospitals."

> "They need to have a weekly inventory of medicines to stop them being diverted away from the hospitals" (NDI and CPGD 2018).

After asking what, why and how questions on health issues (lack of medicines, lack hospitals, poor service and corruption in hospitals),[10] when we asked respondents to rank them in first, second and third most important health concerns, they said: first, lack of medicines; second, poor services; and third, corruption in hospitals.

With regards to the remaining topics of agriculture, infrastructure and public services the lack of equipment, tools and seeds; the quality of roads and bridges; and access to drinking water were, respectively, identified as the first most important concerns (Table 1)[11].

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10 Details can be found in the NDI and CPGD 2018 report on citizens' concerns which can be downloaded from www.cpgd.org.mz/publications.
11 Ibid.

Discussion

Comparing the two data sources, the NDI/CPGD data appears to have a higher level of specific detail which governments and or political parties could use to inform policymaking. First, it has more information on *what* issues policymakers have to consider in decision-making. When it says that health is an issue, for instance, it *specifies* this by unpacking it in the form of lack of medicines, poor service, and corruption in hospitals. Second, it provides information justifying *why* those specific issues are a concern for citizens.

Third, rather than leaving this to the criterion of policymakers, the NDI/CPGD data provides information to policymakers with suggestions from the people's view on *how* political parties should address those issues thus it gives more power to ordinary people to influence policies. By specifying this, it gives policymakers a relatively good ground for decision making.[12]

On the other hand, Afrobarometer data on citizens' concerns only tells us *what* the concerns are. It does not tell us *why* those concerns are concerns to the people and *how* governments could address them. It therefore only presents citizens' concerns or problems broadly mostly without specifying them.

The 2005 Afrobarometer data, for instance, tells us that health is the second most important problem that the government should address followed by education. The data can tell us that health is more of a problem for rural residents or those from the Northern region or the older generation, for example, because data is also collected on the demographics of the respondents which can be used for cross comparisons. However, similar analysis by demographics can also be undertaken with the NDI/CPGD data and the Afrobarometer data cannot inform us on the specificities of the problem, for example, whether the health problem is related to lack of health facilities or poor health service, corruption in health facilities, and so on. The same applies to education (and other concerns raised such as unemployment). It is not possible to tell whether the problem of education is with primary, secondary or tertiary education or lack of school facilities; desk and chairs; corruption in schools; and so forth.

Other aspects to consider when discussing these data is specialization, complexity and methodology. The NDI/CPGD data is solely specialized on citizens' concerns. It engaged focus groups participants on the subject of citizens' concerns during a one to two-hour discussion while Afrobarometer is specialized on broader topics of democracy, governance and society, thus involving interviewees on citizens' concerns for only very few minutes.[13]

With respect to complexity, the Afrobarometer used a single question on citizen concerns whereas NDI/CPGD unpacked it into groups of *what, why* and *how* questions to provide complex details on six main multidimensional issues: politics, economics, health, agriculture, infrastructures and public services. Regarding the methodology, the NDI/CPGD employed a qualitative method with open-ended questions at (focus) group level allowing moderators to probe with additional how and why questions while Afrobarometer quantitative method used closed-ended questions at individual level. The similarity of these two, in terms of outcome, is that both found that unemployment is one of the main concerns that citizens want the government or political parties to address. However, since the NDI/CPGD study unpacks the

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12 Information on why and how can be seen from the full report (NDI and CPGD 2018).
13 The Afrobarometer questionnaire has about 300 questions and takes on average one hour to administer.

Afrobarometer question, it provides complementary, detailed data including contextual information as to why the issues raised are concerns as well as suggested ways they could be resolved. Therefore, rather than relying solely on Afrobarometer data about citizens' concerns in Mozambique, by reviewing both data sources policy makers and decision makers can triangulate the information and have an enhanced understanding of citizen's concerns to better inform their future actions.

References

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