



Centre for Research on
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Why are youth concerns marginalised in development programming?

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Executive Summary

Mozambique, like many African countries, has a young and fast growing population. Young people constitute the majority of the population, with two-thirds of Mozambicans being younger than 25 years of age and three-quarters younger than 35. However, the youth are a disenfranchised majority, similar to women who comprise half of the population. This Policy Brief reveals that the wider enabling environment for youth development tends not to address youth concerns and does so less than women's issues. Recent developmental efforts to raise awareness and tackle the issues that disproportionally represent women and girls has, in part, influenced the government of Mozambique, development partners and non-government organizations (NGOs) to have women advisory positions who provide profound inputs on gender equality and women's empowerment when designing sectoral interventions. However, no similar structures or programming exist for youth affairs. This Policy Brief raises recommendations for youth issues to be more explicitly embedded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and to the government of Mozambique, developing partners and NGOs to tackle youth concerns in their programming by establishing youth advisory positions and formal mechanisms to mainstream and monitor youth concerns in their work.

About the author

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Why are youth concerns marginalised in development programming?

About three-quarters of the Mozambican population is younger than 35 years of age (INE 2017). According to a recent cross-sectional youth assessment report “young Mozambicans constitute a disenfranchised majority [and] many cannot afford to become independent and partake in the privileges and responsibilities of adult life” (USAID 2020:12). While, on the one hand, young people have many aspirations, on the other hand, the enabling environment presents “deficiencies in the provision of basic systems, mechanisms, and infrastructure for [youth development]” (USAID 2020:24). Like many other disadvantaged groups, youth have many needs and concerns. One of their primary concerns is access and quality of education to help themselves acquire employment or to create their own job opportunities. A key barrier linked with this is the existence of a general education system rather than one that incorporates technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

The lack of TVET and entrepreneurial skills is a barrier for youth to initiate their own businesses and employment opportunities. Of 150 focus group discussions from the cross-sectional youth assessment, 23 referred to the lack of professional or vocational training on finance management, in particular, as a barrier to start a business, and 74 groups said the same for TVET in general” (USAID 2020:34). Data from 2018 to 2020 in Table 1 shows that TVET institutions comprise only 1.1 percent of education institutions in the country; higher education institutions 0.2 percent; and the rest is general education that does not provide any specialised skills. Higher education in the country also tends, mostly, to be general as well.

Table 1: Education institutions in Mozambique, 2018-2020

No of institutions	Primary	Secondary	Basic professional education	Medium professional education	(Public) Professional education centres	Higher education
2018	20,658	849	137	56		
2019				59		53
2020					52 (of which 28 are mobile)	
% share	95%	4%	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%

Sources: INE (2018) *Statistical Yearbook 2018 Mozambique*, Maputo; MCTESTP (2018) *Edital. Exames de Admissão aos Institutos Médios do Ensino Técnico-Profissional. Ano Lectivo de 2019*, November; IFPELAC (2020a) *Informe sobre IFPELAC*, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, February; IFPELAC (2020b) *Informação sobre a Formação Profissional Pública Ministrada pelo IFPELAC à Secretaria do Estado da Juventude e Emprego (SEJE)*.

In terms of youth concerns around employment, they find that there are few available jobs in the country. As observed from the comparison of the 2002/3 and 2014/15 Enterprises Censuses, although the number of formal jobs doubled from 270,381 to 525,391 in that period only about one out of every 35 individuals of working age held a formal job (AfDB 2021:23). Although the enabling environment for youth

development constrains youth needs and concerns, there are other factors contributing toward that.

To help reflect on this it is useful to examine the enabling environment for youth development within the country. We can do this by looking at initiatives that are intentionally designed to assist “youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood” (USAID 2012:11) with the aim, as the International Youth Foundation (2017) put it “to strengthen their capacity to enter the labour [sic] market”. By initiatives we mean programming or interventions that adopt a holistic approach to youth – that is, they tackle youth needs and/or concerns when dealing with key challenges on education, health, agriculture, transport, employment, business and so on. In doing so, we probe initiatives promoted by a range of actors, first by the government, second by development partners and third by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Internal enabling environment for youth development

To what extent do initiatives by the government, development partners and NGOs in Mozambique create an enabling environment to address youth concerns?

The government of Mozambique has recently tried to shift from scattered sectoral programming to a more systematised, holistic approach to address youth concerns. Its Intersectoral Committee Supporting the Development of Adolescents and Youth (CIADAJ), coordinated by the former Ministry of Youth and Sports (now the State Secretary of Youth and Employment) has designed a Youth Strategy and Action Plan to integrated youth issues into different sectors based on data from eight sectoral ministries.¹ However, despite the Committee being in existence since 1997 (UNFPA, 2011), it was only in 2018, when the Prime-Minister began chairing the Committee that it gained momentum by obliging eight line ministers to attend it regularly.² Currently, the government supports youth initiatives for innovative entrepreneurial projects in different sectors through the Youth Initiatives Supporting Fund (FAIJ), but with limited budget available.

With respect to development partners, only 11 out of 29 donor interventions were intentionally designed to assist youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood with career guidance and opportunities to enter the labour market. For NGOs, the picture is much worse with only 4 out of 21 NGO interventions addressing youth concerns to strengthen their capacity to enter the labour market (USAID 2020:40).

Notably, most interventions in Mozambique were not intentionally designed to address youth concerns, yet these interventions incorporated components (to differing degrees) to address issues of gender inequality, usually by supporting adolescent girls and young women (USAID 2020:42). This dynamic is also reflected in other elements

¹ Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security; Ministry of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Technical Training; Ministry of Education and Human Development; Ministry of Gender and Social Affairs; Ministry of Industry and Commerce; Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; and Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

² As a result, the Council of Ministers adopted the Youth Action Plan (YAP) by 2018.

of society, such as urban infrastructures. In Maputo city, the capital of Mozambique there exist public squares to acknowledge and recognise respectively women (*Praça da Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, OMM*) and youth (*Praça da Juventude*) but the status of these public squares is telling. As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, when it comes to youth their issues, as represented by the youth square, have been ignored compared to women's concerns.

Figure 1: Youth Square (*Praça da Juventude*), Maputo City, Mozambique



Source: Jornal Notícias retrieved on 14 March 2022

Figure 2: Women's Square (*Praça da Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, OMM*) Maputo City, Mozambique



Source: MOZVR retrieved on 14 March 2022

This bias toward programming for women's empowerment while they constitute only half of Mozambique population's versus youth programming who comprise a much larger proportion of the population is associated first, with the concepts of youth and gender themselves (and the purpose here is not detract the importance of addressing gender equality and women and girls empowerment). As follows: "First, youth entails a transitional aspect of human behaviour [sic]; after a certain number of years, a committed young person upgrades to adulthood and likely stops promoting a youth agenda. But gender tends to be a static concept; a committed adolescent girl or young woman will likely continue to pursue a gender or women's and girls' program [sic] throughout adulthood. Second, Mozambique women's and feminist activism are strong, and organizations such as Women Forum and WILSA have done a lot to advance the gender equality agenda. Additionally, the [wider] international community (and especially the United Nations) is very engaged in supporting gender equality [through Sustainable Development Goal 5]. All this enhances the capacity for gender programming" (USAID 2020:42).

Discussion and recommendations

The wider enabling environment for youth development does not assist the government of Mozambique, development partners and NGOs to design 'youth focused' interventions – that is, those that are intentionally designed to assist "youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood" (USAID 2012:11) with the goal to strengthen their capacity to the labour market (International Youth Foundation 2017). When programming involves youth it only has it as a 'by-product' - that is, the programming does not intend to assist youth into the labour market.

This, to a large extent, is informed and underpinned by trends in the wider development community and international frameworks such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and, more recently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs or Global Goals). Efforts to promote and tackle the issues that disproportionally represent women and girls has resulted in specific targets and goals, such as SDG5 on gender equality, being included in these frameworks which in turn influence practitioners from the government, development partners and NGOs in their programming. However, the same cannot be said for addressing youth concerns. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted, which have a total of 169 targets and 232 indicators (used for global monitoring), only 20 targets have a youth specific component (UNDP, 2017). These are spread across 6 goals, meaning that 11 goals have not youth-focus targets attached to them. While for women and girls there is a dedicated goal (SDG5) with associated targets and 51 indicators listed in the UN Global Indicator framework are identified as gender-related which correspond to 10 of the 17 goals (UN Women and UNDESA, 2021).

When considering the UN SDG enabling environment formulation, youth become the big losers for their development in the local practitioners programming. Within development partners' offices, including NGOs, it is frequent to find a position for gender advisors and/or focal points on gender issues. Many organisations also include in their strategies mechanisms to mainstream gender considerations in their work, or to treat it as a cross-cutting issues. However, this is rarely evident for youth

concerns. This gap suggests, as a consequence, that when designing programmes and other development initiatives, that development partners and NGOs are more likely to receive gender oriented inputs than youth focused insights.

Since two-thirds of Mozambique's population comprises citizens younger than 25 years of age and three-quarters younger than 35 years old it is recommended that:

- A stronger, more prominently inclusion of youth concerns is included into the existing UN sustainable development goals framework and that any future iterations of Global Goals, beyond 2030, should consider a dedicated goal on youth development.
- The government of Mozambique, development partners and NGOs should establish and, in the case of CIADAJ, strengthen formal mechanisms to include youth development into their programming. This could be by establishing youth advisories and youth focal points positions within the government, developing partners and NGOs, by developing strategies to formally integrate youth concerns into all programming; and having robust monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms on youth development programming for accountability purposes and continual review of the status of the enabling environment for youth concerns.

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