



DEBATE II – Equal opportunities in accessing employment and education

This two-pager sets out the highlights of Debate II, part of a series of five Dialogs on Inclusive Policies and Youth Employment in the Extractive Sector in Mozambique held in 2016 and presented on 25 May 2017.

The debate on the promotion of inclusive policies and youth employment led to reflections on the diversity of the Mozambican population and the **inequitable access to employment, education and social policies**. The second debate focused on the fact that, in Mozambique, some people face greater difficulties than others in accessing opportunities for employment and education. The reasons cited for the poor inclusion of certain social groups or individuals were: limited financial resources, place of residence far from workplace, low level of education, little work experience, language limitations, and stigma or discrimination (e.g., against women, youth, people with disabilities, people with albinism, people living with HIV/AIDS, and people with chronic diseases, among other things).

For women, ‘socio-cultural’ causes of exclusion include a tendency to teach girls to limit themselves to tasks and professions considered to be ‘feminine’. In this regard, the discussion focused on **gender equality** in accessing employment and education opportunities. The barriers faced by women in accessing the labour market were discussed. Regarding the extractive industry, the participants from the provinces and districts¹ where these companies operate shared some of their experiences on the ground, noting that women still tend to hold low-paying jobs (with few holding management positions) and fulfil social roles in the community (e.g., roles linked to cooking and servitude). However, examples also pointed to slight and gradual changes taking place in relation to women's access to jobs (direct and indirect) generated by the extractive industry. Either due to personal interest or the stimuli of gender lectures, some (although still only a few) local women have been able to advance within companies, join projects, and perform jobs and functions that are seen as ‘masculine’ (e.g., a woman who started as a

servant is now a machine operator in the District of Balama/Cabo Delgado). Students emphasized that certain training courses are attended more by men and others more by women, also following gender roles. A student in the painting course² proudly said that until recently painting was considered to a man's job, but now she would graduate, along with other women.

Examples highlighted that the way women are culturally educated can lead to an inferiority complex, shame and even fear, which can limited their access to jobs. Arguments (and doubts) were also presented about the existence of *biological characteristics* that make it impossible for women to perform certain functions. Some participants disagreed with this view and an intense exchange of ideas took place, indicating that this issue needs clarification and specific training to raise awareness on the **socially-constructed factors** underlying gender inequality.

In proposing solutions to reduce inequality, young men stressed the important **role that men can play** in motivating women to realize that they are capable and should compete for job openings. The encouragement of women by their families, teachers and communities was also cited as a factor motivating girls to attend courses that may be viewed as traditionally for men.

Among groups of young women, combating **early marriage** was cited as one way to help girls believe in a different future, in which they can continue their education³ and be employed.

Affirmative action (or ‘positive discrimination’ policies) was highlighted as an important mechanism for social inclusion. However, differing opinions and doubts emerged as to what might be the best mechanisms to promote access by specific individuals or groups (women, locals, the national population, youths, and others) to jobs that have access barriers. Another challenge related to gender policies is sexual harassment in accessing employment (discussed in Debate IV).

From the perspective of inclusion, the participants also discussed the need to **guarantee jobs in the extractive industry for the Mozambican population**. Barriers to employment for youths (with little experience) and the local population (from where companies are operating) were discussed. Reports and studies⁴ have warned that formal jobs offered by these companies have been unable to absorb and value local labour.

The risk of local communities failing to benefit from jobs, while at the same time having to deal with the negative impacts of such investments – such as pollution, environmental risks, increased violence, strain on infrastructure, increased costs/inflation, social

and geographical inequalities, worsening quality of life, and labour conflicts – was also discussed.

The tendency of enterprises in the extractive industry sector to hire foreign labour or people from outside local communities was justified by the poor skills of local people/companies in relation to the specific requirements of extractive industry companies. There is a need for **training to prepare the national and local workforce** to compete on an equal basis with the job opportunities (see Debate III). It was said that certain services have been performed by foreigners or Mozambicans from outside the province, when they could be carried out by the local population. It was suggested that companies should have fair and transparent **criteria for hiring local staff** and that the Government of Mozambique should enforce such criteria and processes, including by ensuring the equal treatment of workers within extractive industry companies (e.g., in terms of employment criteria and work conditions).

In addition to equal opportunities, the debates in the provinces focused on the importance of respect and peaceful coexistence between migrant workers (Mozambicans and foreigners) and the local population. In Cabo Delgado a specific debate was proposed relating to the clash between **work cultures** and **local cultures**⁵. This was suggested as a way of reflecting on recent experiences and the challenges faced when extractive industry companies brought in workers to settle in socio-cultural contexts different from their own. According to the examples given, peaceful coexistence involves mutual respect and adaptation to habits, attitudes, and ways of thinking, acting and working differently. This topic was approached with care, noting that it is of interest to the entire population (the government, workers and entrepreneurs⁶) and requires strategies agreed upon by the parties involved, as cultural values and childhood learning, are not easily changed and should be respected.

Possible forms of coexistence between local work cultures (usual practices/work patterns of the communities) and the work cultures of the extractive industry enterprises (practices/work patterns necessary for the expected execution of the tasks) were discussed. Some opinions, namely, that there is 'laziness' or little interest in work (i.e., among youths and the local population) were challenged. Opponents believe that companies have not yet been able to adapt to local cultures in terms of the type of tasks, schedules, acceptable reasons for worker dismissal and other rules.

Others explained the conflicts between the different work cultures as arising due to different interests,

habits, and customs, as well as weak stimulus to work and lack of vocational training (see Debate III). The interdependence and need for mutual respect between businesses and the local population was emphasized. However, some examples show that in practice there is still disagreement, prejudice and an unhealthy relationship between work cultures and local cultures. The phrase expressed by the theatre group⁷ "*We have a 'culture of work', but within our culture!*" summed up this debate well.

Lastly, the debate drew attention to the need for equality in terms of the **digital inclusion** of rural populations, youth and people with limited access to the Internet, television, newspaper and radio. Practices such as requesting a CV in digital format or the dissemination of vacancies/training only through the Internet were highlighted as barriers to the inclusion of those who may have the skills and interest in doing work, but who do not have access to these tools.

Plataforma Inclusão is an intersectoral initiative launched in 2016 as a contribution to the sharing of knowledge and identification of concrete actions to promote inclusive policies and decent employment for youths in Mozambique.

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¹ Participants in the Intersectoral Dialogues included the administrators of the Districts of Ancuabe, Balama and Montepuez (Province of Cabo Delgado).

² Conducted by IFPELAC (Cabo Delgado).

³ Early marriage has been cited as one of the factors leading to increased school drop-outs by girls.

⁴ OMR (2016) 'Extractive industry: the socio-spatial (as)symmetries and social movements – Analysis of the Province of Tete.'

Presentation of preliminary research data on the subject. Rural Environment Observatory (Observatório do Meio Rural, OMR), Quelimane, October 2016.

⁵ This discussion section was proposed and facilitated by the Open Terrace Center (Cabo Delgado). The term 'cultures' has been used in the plural to mark respect for cultural diversity and the existence of different opinions on the subject.

⁶ Excerpts from the speech (recorded in video) by the Headquarters of the Union of Mozambican Workers (Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique – OTM Central Sindical) of Cabo Delgado.

⁷ The methodology of the Dialogues included the production of two artistic contents addressing these themes: one theater play and a music song. This quote refers to a scene of the play produced in the Province of Cabo Delgado, by the theater group called Matibule e Amigos.