



**NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE**
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Perceptions of the Democratic Process

*A Report on Focus Group Research on Democracy
and Civic Education in Mozambique*

Eduardo Saraiva (CLAIM)

November 1996

Perceptions of the Democratic Process

A Report on Focus Group Research on Democracy and Civic Education in Mozambique

Eduardo Saraiva

Centro Latino Americano de Investigacao de Mercado (CLAIM)



November 1996

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Composition of Groups	3
Focus Group Guide	4-6
Focus Group Results	6-18
II. Information Sources	6-7
III. Local Authorities	7-8
IV. Local Elections	8-10
V. Function and Responsibility of Government	10-13
VI. Democracy in Mozambique	13-15
VII. Democratic Mechanisms	16-17
VIII. NDI Materials	17-18
Final Conclusions	19-20

INTRODUCTION

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted a civic education program in 1996 in all of Mozambique's 10 provinces. This national program focused on six different democracy themes and issues tested and identified through Focus Group research conducted in February 1996. These themes and issues were:

- (1) citizens rights and responsibilities;
- (2) how citizens can participate at all levels in the political life of the country;
- (3) the multi-party system;
- (4) the structure of the State at the national level;
- (5) the composition of the National Assembly and duties of the Deputies; and
- (6) the duties and responsibilities of government.

CLAIM (Centro Latino Americano de Investigaçao de Mercado), based in Sao Paulo, Brazil, was contracted by NDI in November 1996 to conduct and analyze eight focus groups in diverse regions of Mozambique. The research was spearheaded by Eduardo Saraiva, the director of CLAIM. It was Saraiva's second trip to Mozambique, and this report documents his findings. It should be understood, however, that context of some of Saraiva's comments were inevitably lost in the translation.

The purpose of the research was to gain qualitative measurements of the effectiveness of NDI's program and participation in the democratic development of Mozambique. Additionally, this research sought to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of Mozambican society concerning key points in the democratic transition process. The research specifically evaluated knowledge about existing democratic structures and upcoming municipal elections among rural and urban populations, both literate and illiterate. The results of these findings will be used to assist NDI in the planning of their civic education activities in 1997.

Funding for this project was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). CLAIM wishes to thank USAID and NDI for including us in this important project.



Traditional Healers in Meconte

METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in Mozambique does not differ from what is normally used in qualitative research, which is the use of a questionnaire as a guideline and the group dynamic with a moderator stimulating the participants to discuss among themselves the proposed topics.

Unlike other countries where an official language is observed throughout, participants in certain regions of Mozambique do not speak the official language and are illiterate. We used the following techniques to overcome these unique challenges: individuals who spoke the local language were trained as group moderators; the CLAIM representative received simultaneous translation of the group discussion and helped guide the local moderator as needed; and detailed notes were taken of each session characterizing the group's dynamics and interactions. Verbatim comments were also noted; all sessions were recorded on video and reviewed prior to completing this report; and a written summary of the session was prepared using the video and written notes.

For all sessions, special care was taken to speak with local residents before and after the formal group discussion. These informal discussions provided insight into the way of life for the community, problems encountered by the residents, their aspirations and daily habits. Additionally, the results of each session were evaluated by the CLAIM representative, NDI program officer, provincial coordinator and translators.

Focus groups were conducted over a 13 day period in November, 1996. A total of eight sites were selected for focus group discussions. Five sites previously included in NDI focus group research were selected to measure the effectiveness and progress of NDI's civic education program. These sites were: Meconta, Zalala, Quelimane, Tica and Chimoio. Control groups were assembled in three sites where no NDI civic education activities had occurred. These sites were: Vilankulo, Mutarara and Matalana. NDI was responsible for choosing the focus group locations and recruited each group's participants. A summary of the composition of each group follows.



Teachers in Vilankulo

COMPOSITION OF GROUPS					
SITE	TYPE OF GROUP	TOTAL	Men	Women	Language
MECONTA	Nampula Traditional Healers	15	6	9	Macao
QUELIMANE	Zambezia Primary School Teachers	11	7	4	Portuguese
ZALALA	Zambezia Fishermen	16	15	1	Chuabo
CHIMOIO	Manica Community Leaders	12	9	3	Portuguese
TICA	Sofala Peasant Women	16	-	16	Sena
VILANKULO	Inhambane Primary School Teachers	18	12	6	Portuguese
MUTARARA	Tete Community Leaders	12	8	4	Sena
MATALANA	Maputo Peasants	14	13	1	Ronga
TOTAL		114	70 62%	44 38%	

All focus groups were conducted using the following guide for discussion.

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE - NOVEMBER 1996

- I. Warm up
 - Introduction of moderators and observers
 - Explanation for the reasons of the meeting - civic education
 - Explanation of the non-partisan feature of NDI's work in Mozambique
 - Introduction of participants

- II. Information Sources
 - a) Where did you get information about the elections and how to vote?
 - b) Where do you usually get information about important events?
 - Radio
 - TV
 - Newspaper
 - Friends and neighbors
 - Church organization
 - Market
 - Community leaders
 - c) Do you have a radio that works?
 - d) Do you usually listen to other people's radios? Whose?
 - e) Which language do you usually listen to?
 - f) Do you know where the broadcast comes from?

- III. Local Authorities (These questions were asked only in the Control Groups of Vilankulo, Mutarara and Matalana to find out the perception of the present authority structures in the local community -- who governs and who solves the problems.)
 - a) Who are the leaders of your community?
 - b) Are there women leaders in your community?
 - c) Who usually solves the problems in your community? (Example)
 - d) Who solves the conflicts in your community? (Example)
 - e) Are there different people to solve different problems? (Probe for what the administrator does, or other people mentioned as authority, traditional authorities if any, etc.)
 - f) Which groups or organizations help solve problems in your community?
 - g) What does 'local authority' mean for you?

- IV. Local elections (These questions are to find out what people have heard or know about the process of democratization and local elections.)
 - a) What have you already heard about the local elections?
 - b) Why are these elections taking place?
 - c) Would you like to vote in these elections?

- V. Function and responsibilities of the government (Questions to evaluate if people know about the Parliament and its function, about the government and its function.)
- What is the government for you?
 - What is a problem the government should solve?
 - What have you heard about the National Assembly?
 - What do you know about the deputies in the National Assembly?
 - What is the deputy's function?
 - If you could talk to a deputy what would you say?
- VI. Democracy in Mozambique
- People say there is democracy in Mozambique. What do you think democracy is?
 - Do you think it is good to have various parties? (Try to identify the reasons)
 - Have you heard about the Constitution?
 - People say everybody has rights in Mozambique. What have you heard about this?
- VII. Democratic Mechanisms (These questions are to find out people's actual experiences in recognizing and making use of democratic mechanisms and their motivation to participate.)
- Have you heard about a petition?
 - If necessary, would you write a petition? (Why, yes/no)
 - Have you ever written or signed a petition?
 - Have you heard of public forums?
 - Have you personally attended or listened on the radio to any public forums?
 - Would you participate in a public forum session if any took place here?
(Why, yes/no)
 - Would you participate in a complaint to the government if there were a violation of rights? (Why, yes/no)
 - Would you sign a petition if it were necessary? (Why, yes/no)
 - Would you participate in a meeting with a government official? (Why, yes/no)
 - Would you participate in a community meeting about an important issue?
(Why, yes/no)
 - Are you an associate or member of any organization, NGO, or other association? (Try to find out which)
 - Have you ever had any meetings with a government official? (Try to find out which official and the purpose of the meeting.)
- VIII. NDI Materials
(*Show illustrated album*)
- Have you seen this book before?
 - What does this book mean to you?
 - Who made this book? (Try to find out if the answer is the government, NGO, or a political party, etc.)

(Play five minutes of the radio drama in the local language)

- d) Have you heard this radio program before?
- e) What does this program mean to you?
- f) Who was the producer of this radio program? (Try to find out if the answer is the government, NGO, CNE or a political party?)

Focus Group Results:

II. INFORMATION SOURCES

In the target population group of this research, there were no signs of seeking out information. Among all groups, we found direct and oral communication methods to have strong cultural links. Information is not sought, it 'arrives'. Even when referring to the national elections, an important period in this new democratic society, the information sources were cited as:

- ▶ "Political party campaigns"
- ▶ "From the radio"
- ▶ "From some people who came here to talk to us"

When encouraged, on the other hand, people showed a strong desire to be better informed. The participants see focus groups themselves as an opportunity for them to gain and clarify information. In areas where NDI civic education sessions have taken place, the NDI civic education trainers were viewed as important sources of information. Those who had not participated in NDI civic education sessions learned about them by word of mouth and hence participated in relevant discussions on the subject with other citizens. In areas not yet reached by NDI, the difference in knowledge is noteworthy regarding civic themes, democratic structures, rights and responsibilities, citizenship, etc. Due to low literacy rates and inefficient distribution networks, newspapers and magazines were rarely mentioned as resources for acquiring information by participants from both rural and urban areas.

Despite the distortions that arise from verbal communication, the traditional means of oral information-sharing remains strong amongst the rural population where conversations with neighbors and at the market were often cited as ways to stay informed. Community leaders, religious organizations, and other NGOs were rarely mentioned as information sources. Although these groups disseminate information, they were not recognized as a general information source by the community. We can infer that information from these sources is viewed as being specific to the group with the information imparted having particular objectives which may include evangelizing, catechism, or even partisan politics.

This attitude is diametrically opposed to how participants perceived NDI's civic education program which was recognized as being nonpartisan, dealing with issues of interest to citizens, and providing each person ways to freely and better understand the changes taking place in society.

All participants wanted to participate in or have access to civic education because civic education enables them to discuss the political situation in the country, to better evaluate government performance, and to freely express their own point of view. This interest in political issues among the local population is perfectly understandable given the recent end of a long civil war.

Radio was always cited by this target population as the most popular media source. Its influence is strong in all areas. Problems with receiving radio information were always mentioned in rural communities:

- ▶ “A radio is a very expensive thing for us.”
- ▶ “The price of batteries is very expensive, so we cannot always buy them.”
- ▶ “It is difficult to find batteries around here.”
- ▶ “During broadcasting times I am always working.”
- ▶ “My neighbor has a radio, but if I were to listen to the radio in his house, he will know that I either don’t have money to buy batteries, or that I am saving mine.”

The passivity of these reasons cannot be viewed as a form of alienation. When the price of a radio or batteries was recalled, there was always an ironic smile masked within a serious face, reminding us about the extreme difficulties they are experiencing.

“I do not have money to eat, batteries, ugh, batteries...”

These impediments were used to justify how infrequently people are able to seek news on the radio. However, all participants knew the originating cities of radio stations, what hours the signal can be captured in their area, and the hours and languages of each broadcast.

III. LOCAL AUTHORITIES (Asked only in Vilankulo, Mutarara and Matalana)

“Local authorities” was the expression people used most often to refer to traditional structures of power. Regulos or Mambos were immediately cited. In some areas, specific mention was made of Secretaries.

Due to their cultural customs, people recognized the power of local authorities. However, the scope of power of these authorities did not extend beyond the familial level. ‘Local authorities’ are capable of acting in cases of petty theft, familial problems among village inhabitants, divorces, and other similar cases. The way people deal with these cases one could call almost ritualistic. For example, in all cases there is an attempt to find a solution by holding a meeting of the involved parties and their relatives. If this does not bring a solution that is accepted by all, the problem is taken to the Regulos/Mambos or the Secretaries who, with their formally accepted leadership, search for agreement, impose punishment and/or recommend forms of compensation, etc. If the conflict persists and depending on the case, these authorities will take the claimant to the police or to the District Administrator.

We can see this is a lengthy process operating at the margins of formal law and allowing for the presentation of cases by a Régulo, Mambo or Secretary and the meting of punishment that may not necessarily be unbiased. However, the process is accepted as normal and even ideal.

While these local authorities are preferred for resolving familial issues, group participants unanimously declared them inefficient and inappropriate for resolving what is referred to as 'major problems.' Through the participants comments, we can assume they are used to structures of local authority and well-defined powers, because:

- ▶ there are no narrated cases of power struggles among leaders;
- ▶ there is a system in which different authorities are consulted for solving distinct problems;
- ▶ the use of distinct levels of authority presupposes the clear acceptance of the concept of shared power.

Participants did not recognize the existence of any organization helping to solve the problems of their community. As one Mutarara peasant said in the group, probably referring to the stated objectives of the focus groups:

"No other organizations have come here yet to help us resolve our problems."

They also did not indicate the existence of women as leaders in their community.

"We are women and we are not supposed to hear certain secrets. Because men get out and know more, they are the ones who should know these things." *Female peasant from Mutarara*

IV. LOCAL ELECTIONS

All of the populations interviewed know local elections will be held soon. In urban areas with a literate population the term used to refer to the elections was 'autarchic elections' which demonstrates a clear knowledge of the discussed theme. Participants also affirmed these elections should have already occurred, that they were postponed for partisan political reasons, that the constituencies to vote in the election are still undefined and whether only urban residents or both urban and rural district-area residents will vote. Group participants strongly declared, "We think that all Mozambicans should vote."

In all groups there was a significant proportion who claimed to know the reasons why local elections should be held. These reasons were tied to their search for a solution to their dissatisfaction, or rather, that direct elections should be held to facilitate or permit the following:

- ▶ possibility of access to authorities and a way to channel their issues;
- ▶ possibility to express one's self in one's primary language; and
- ▶ ability to choose competent, responsible people without partisan views.

Participants indicated they want to choose people for their personal qualities, independently of the parties to which they belong.

“They are special people who are responsible, honest and whom we choose.” *Matalana*

When discussing this topic among themselves, these same reasons were given by participants who claimed to understand them to those who remain quiet or who claimed to be ignorant of these issues. After the group discussion, all of the participants expressed a strong desire to participate and vote in the election, as an efficient way of solving the problems of their communities. It is important to emphasize that in none of the groups was it said the local elections were a predetermined requirement outlined in the Constitution or due to voting being a right and responsibility of every national citizen.

“We will participate in these elections. We want an administrator who solves our problems.”
Traditional healer in Meconta

“Only with elections will we be able to choose someone who will do a good job.” *Female peasant in Tica*

“We have to elect in terms of the person’s ability.” *Female peasant in Tica*

“Of all of them, we only ask for their conscience once they are elected.” *Female peasant in Tica*

“We should take into account what [the candidate] is, not what he has.” *Female peasant in Tica*



Fishermen in Zalala

“We will work together with him on a solution for our problems.” *Male peasant in Mutarara*

“We want them to be from right here.” *Peasant in Mutarara*

“Among [the candidates], we will prefer the ones who speak Sena, our language.” *Female peasant in Mutarara*

There are signals of impatience and strong doubts concerning the efficacy of the local elections in solving the stated problems.

“The people have tired of waiting so long. If they delay much more with these elections, I don’t think I’ll vote again.” *Fisherman in Zalala*

“It will be difficult to choose in these elections. Those who have money are considered right, with corruption there is no justice. And without justice we will never solve anything.” *Traditional healer in Meconta*

V. FUNCTION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT

Among the literate participants in urban areas, we were able to obtain a series of definitions for ‘government.’ This demonstrates a knowledge of the system that was expressed as ‘a group of structured institutions,’ reflecting a good level of politicization within this group. In the rural areas, among the illiterate, there was a simpler definition:

“Government is the people.”

Similarly, a colonized or paternalistic vision often persists:

“Government is the father of all of us.”

We also observed a dissatisfaction with aspects of the paternalistic role of government:

“Government is the father that tells the son what he should do, but it would be good if, sometimes, he were to also come listen to his children.” *fisherman in Zalala*

“Government is a father with eight children, but who only takes care of two.” *teacher in Vilankulo*

Feelings of exclusion emerged among the poorer participants, whereas feelings of non-acquiescence to the existence of privilege surface among the most literate. During the group discussion, there were smiles and signals of approval at each definition of government, but the discussion always contained some form of criticism. It was easy to perceive participants having difficulty in defining what ‘government’ is, because they were often overcome by the emotions the theme provokes. Instead

they focused on evaluating the actions of those who are in power or those people who, in some form, take part in government.

The National Assembly was recognized in the urban areas, even though its purpose and operation were not clear to the participants. In these areas, the discussion became a question of whether the government creates laws and submits them to the Assembly, or if it falls upon the Assembly to create the law and for the government to carry them out.

In some rural areas like Tica, Meconta and Zalala, the common comments include:

“[The Assembly] is where the important people meet in order to argue.”

“It is where those who lead the people stay.”

In other locales like Vilankulo and Mutarara, no one managed to explain the meaning of the words ‘National Assembly.’

When the discussion theme was the ‘role of the deputy,’ with the exception of female peasants in Tica, all participants preferred to point out what deputies “don’t do” without revealing any deeper knowledge of what deputies are expected to do or should do to fulfill their roles. In reality, this reflects a lack of specific knowledge concerning the duties of parliamentarians. The criticisms always centered on expectations of improved living conditions, generated in the electoral period, that were not being met.

Among literate participants in the urban areas of Vilankulo, the discussion centered around the legitimacy of the deputies’ popular mandate. The participants disagreed with the party list system and indicated a preference for direct election of candidates. According to the participants, the list system invites ineptitude and corruption of elected officials. Despite being unable to explain the duties of a deputy, the participants had some knowledge related to the National Assembly. For example the traditional healers in Meconta, Nampula Province were able to correctly identify the number of deputies from their Province -- 54.

In Tica, female peasants articulated some of the duties of the Assembly:

“We elect the deputies.”

“They are the ones who take our concerns to the Assembly.”

“They represent the parties in Parliament.”

“They perform public work.”

These statements are juxtaposed with comments from other areas:

"I know that deputies are there, but I have never seen one and I don't know what they do."
Meconta

"Deputies are symbols of reconciliation." *Meconta*

"They promise everything during elections but they don't do anything." *Meconta*

"What I see is only talk, talk. They don't do anything." *Zalala*

"I don't know what a deputy's duties are. I always heard that they just talk and talk." *Zalala*

When asked what participants would say to a deputy, if given the opportunity, two constant antagonistic positions were evident among the groups. One position revealed ignorance of a deputy's roles and functions, typified by the following comments:

"We don't have anything to say to the deputies. They are the ones who should tell us what we should do." *Fisherman in Zalala*

"I would ask the deputy to tell me what he is doing there." *Community leader in Chimoio*

The second position was an extensive list of demands reflecting their concerns, and personal and collective needs. Participants wanted deputies to address the following:

- ▶ the high cost of living;
- ▶ low salaries and inflation which are presented as generating widespread corruption;
- ▶ increasing the number of schools, better equipment and materials in existing schools and improving the quality of teaching;
- ▶ increasing the number of hospitals and number of available beds;
- ▶ better distribution of medicine to the population;
- ▶ providing greater public security or efficient action by the police to combat a series of criminal acts to which the participants say they have been exposed;
- ▶ improving the quality of transportation whether for public transportation or improving the roadways to facilitate the delivery of consumer goods.

The quantity, quality and presentation of these demands and concerns by the participants about local and national issues were a recognition and denouncement of the government's incompetence in managing public resources and reflected a need for clear definition of social policies. They noted an ineffectiveness of both the National Assembly and the deputies who comprise it, and by doing so they implicitly recognized the deputies are--or should be--their representatives.

VI. DEMOCRACY IN MOZAMBIQUE

The affirmation of democracy existing in Mozambique was not shared by all of the group participants, neither was it denied. Even among those who contested the existence of democracy, the participants aspired to a society where everyone has the same opportunities, which in their opinion is not currently the case. They believed some are taking advantage of the new political system.

“Democracy continues to be the dream envisioned much as it was before the 1994 elections. Elections were the catalyst for grand expectations and change in everyone’s life; expectations that have largely gone unmet.” *Zalala - fishermen*

“I don’t know how to explain, in the time of elections they said that we were going to find our relatives and that it would be good.”

“When they talked about this, I thought that it was going to be like the white people [having jobs, factories and commercial farms].”

“They said it was good for the well-being of the people, but we held elections and nothing happened.”

“I think that democracy exists in Mozambique, but things are all very bad. I think that true democracy has still not arrived here.”

“There is only democracy for the elite. It isn’t for the people. We chose a government to serve the people, not to serve those who govern.”

“Why don’t you ask the white people about this? [The current people in government] are not going to give work to everyone. For now, there is only work for the relatives of the government.” *Meconta - traditional healers*

“We heard a lot about democracy, but until now we have yet to see much of it.”

“It is very similar to wartime. We had to hide in the bush. Now we have to hide our things in the bush, the city is full of thieves.” *Mutarara - peasants and community leaders*

“Democracy is the only thing that can improve our plight. We have never had anything, and we continue to have nothing.”

“It is the communion of ideas.”

“It is a good mandate since it brings peace to everyone.”

“We would have democracy if we had our human condition.”

“It only exists in words, not in practice. I cannot talk about democracy if I am hungry, if I don’t have work. I am living in a great cloud of darkness.”

In Tica - women peasants had a more positive view of democracy, saying:

“Democracy is the people. But the people must work for themselves.”

“We are free. We can do what we want.”

“Before democracy we could not even communicate with one another, now we can raise livestock, farm and go where we would like.”

“Democracy is good, we are convinced that it is better.”

The concept of the multi-party system among the target populations in this study can be analyzed from two distinct positions: where civic education has occurred and where it has not. Participants in the urban and rural areas where NDI had conducted civic education seminars evaluated the multi-party system as good, useful, and necessary. In rural areas not exposed to NDI’s civic education project, opinions appeared divided. During the discussions between participants, however, those who considered the multi-party system as ideal convinced those who had doubts about the necessity, usefulness, and advantages offered by the system.

“Various parties are good, many ideas are better.” *Fisherman in Zalala*

“Several parties are good for democracy, but when there was only one, we had more order.”
Traditional healer in Meconta

“We are convinced that having various parties is better. One person by themselves cannot resolve all the problems, various people can bring together their ideas and resolve problems better. *Peasant woman in Tica*

The exception is in Mutarara, where the system is totally rejected.

“Various parties provoke problems. Each one pulls for their side.” *Peasant woman in Mutarara*

Everyone knows that Mozambique has a Constitution, and citizens need to abide by the laws of the country.

“It is the mother of all laws in the country.” *Peasant woman in Tica*

Meanwhile, even without the slightest knowledge of the subject matter, participants complained the Constitution is not being obeyed:

“I know that there is a Constitution, but I don’t think that it is being followed.” *Traditional healer in Meconta*

All denouncements were loaded with sentiments dealing with individual rights that are constitutionally guaranteed but constantly violated. Since the Constitution’s principles are not well known, there was great confusion among the participants as to the rights and responsibilities of the government and those of the citizenry.

There was an extremely strong desire to know the Constitution, to the point that those who are literate made a common request of NDI to send them copies of the Constitution. (Quelimane, Chimoio and Vilankulo.)

Maxims and their corresponding concepts such as: “Each right corresponds to a responsibility,” or, “The rights of one end where the rights of another begin” were cited only among teachers in Quelimane. In general when ‘rights’ were discussed, participants focused on ‘inequalities.’ However, it is in this way that participants showed they are not indifferent to the concepts, making us recognize the internal revolt stemming from their daily struggles.

“I only see the rights of the criminals.” *Traditional healer in Meconta*

“The police do nothing, they are friends with the thieves. They split the stolen goods between them.” *Peasant woman in Tica*

“There are no midwives in the hospitals, it is the male nurses who do the deliveries. Many women have their children at home, because they are ashamed of the male nurses. It is for this reason that many women die at home while giving birth.” *Peasant woman in Tica*



Peasant Women in Tica

VII. DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS

The petition as a democratic instrument to defend citizens' rights can be used effectively in Mozambique if its structure, application, and procedures are properly presented to the target population groups. Everyone in Quelimane, Meconta, Zalala and Tica said they knew about the petition as a democratic device, but only in Meconta was this seen as ineffective.

"Today it is the local traditional leaders who hold the power, and there are drugs and thieves. There are no laws and, if they exist, they are not followed." *Traditional healer in Meconta.*

In the other cities this resource was viewed as useful, valid and necessary.

"And if there arises a barrier locally to a problem's solution, we will air the petitions on the radio." *Peasant woman in Tica*

"If the first does not bring results, we will repeat the process until our rights are recognized. We must follow this idea." *Teacher in Quelimane*

In the focus groups that took place in Vilankulo and Chimoio, where petitions had never been tried, the idea created enthusiasm. In Chimoio, the testimony of two successful experiences with 'complaint letters' brought credibility to the petitions.

"I only need to learn how to write it [a petition]. Then I will write one." *Community leader in Vilankulo*

In Mutarara where they hardly understood the meaning of the word, the idea was seen as ineffective.

There was little sign of fear in signing a petition. On the contrary, what we saw were acts revealing the possibility of the citizens using this as a democratic tool.

A peasant woman in Tica declared:

"I would make and sign [a petition] for all to know that my rights have been violated!"

When a teacher in Quelimane expressed fear...

"I have a relative who was arrested, and even after several attempts, it was not possible to locate him; the family gathered and decided not to present a petition for fear of reprisals."

All participants condemned this attitude and assured us they were willing to participate either individually or as a group to sign a petition asking for clarification about the arrest and location of the arrested man.

The possibility of organizing a “public forum” or public event where elected representatives and citizens come together in one’s city, district or village provoked excitement and expectations.

This type of event was known only in Quelimane and Chimoio where public forums had taken place. Indeed a participant from each of these groups had attended a Public Forum.

People in the focus groups responded to the information about public forums positively, promising to participate if given the chance.

The exception was in Mutarara, where they said they would not participate because this type of event could never occur for the following reasons:

They did not believe deputies would travel to Mutarara; they did not believe deputies representing different parties could peacefully sit around the same table, speaking with the local population; and they did not believe ordinary people could speak to deputies.

These positions show the surprise and suspicion Mutarara residents felt when presented with the possibility of utilizing democratic mechanisms. The misery in which they live is not so different from the war period which deeply scarred their lives and their concepts of democracy.

VIII. NDI MATERIALS

Story Board

In the cities or districts where NDI conducted its civic education programs, the material was recognized by many participants who, despite not always correctly identifying the organization, were able to point out the local civic education trainer who led the sessions. In other locales, showing the story board provoked great interest, curiosity and surprise, especially the photographs of the National Assembly building and the plenary session with its deputies working peacefully.

The story board’s great utility was its recognition as educational and non-partisan in content and presentation. It was always stated the material belonged to ‘some NGO’ and in some places participants identified NDI as the owner.

Comments on the story board include:

“It would be good if everything could always be like that. It is possible!” *traditional healer in Meconta*

“This is part of the way that can bring well-being to Mozambique” *traditional healer in Meconta*

“To learn from this book will help us understand things” *peasant leader in Mutarara*

“This helps us understand the truth” *religious leader in Mutarara*

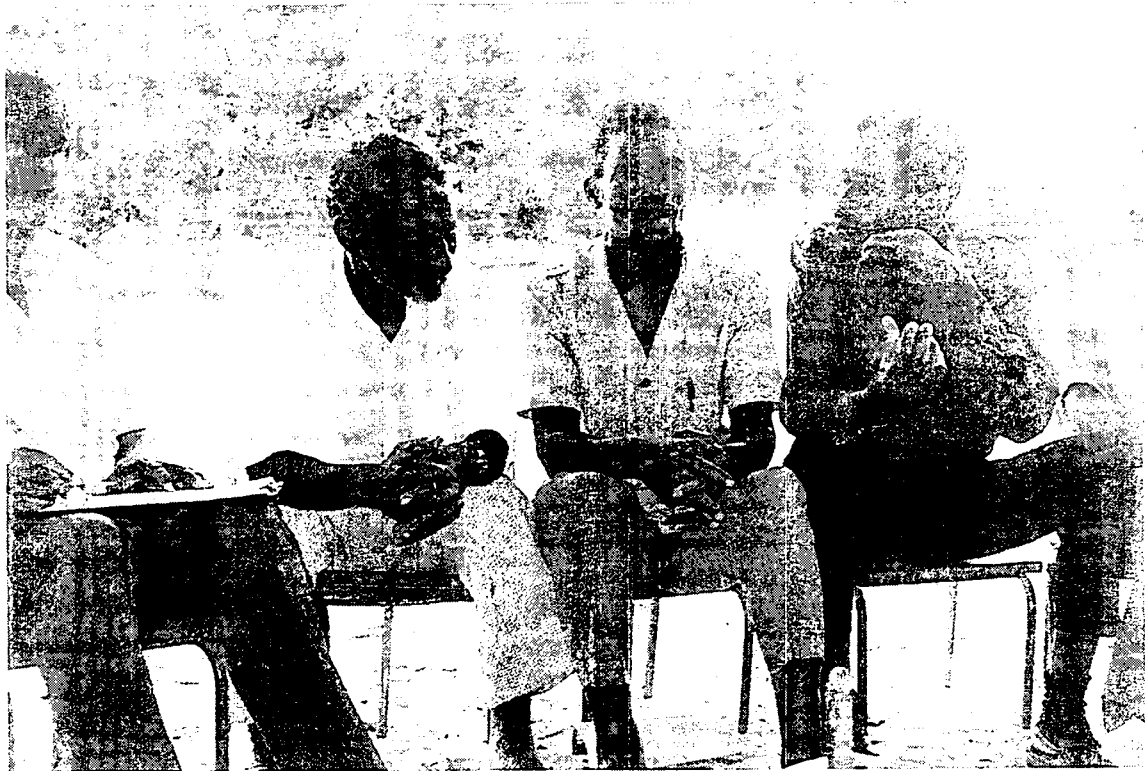
“The book shows us about democracy and how we should live in this country. There is no racial discrimination.” *peasant woman in Tica*

Radio Show

The radio drama plays were more widely recognized than the story board. However, since many people work during broadcast times, only a few said they were currently following episodes. More people acknowledged listening to the radio show during the 1994 electoral period. The song jingle that comes at the beginning of each episode is very popular and some women participants danced while it was being played.

The radio drama was unanimously considered to be an effective and pleasant way to present education.

The radio drama producers are usually acknowledged as being affiliated with the National Electoral Commission (CNE), with a few making a connection to NDI or ‘some NGO.’



Peasants in Matalana

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to evaluate the level of assimilation by citizens of democratic concepts and participation where NDI had conducted civic education programs. We compared participants in regions exposed to NDI's civic education programs to those outside of this context. The sample populations selected for these groups were representative of the population targeted for civic education by NDI.

Oral commentaries were relied on exclusively for this report. This is central to the fundamental conclusion of this study, which establishes the different levels of knowledge of democratic structures in Mozambique, of observed discrepancies, and of the orally propagated concepts related to the researcher by the target population.

The attention, the hospitality, the smiles and other displays of affection at times evoked my personal emotion. These gestures represented the wants and aspirations of those who could, I believe, become participants in the development of a free and democratic country, where they will enjoy their constitutional rights and perform the duties demanded by their nation.

Interest in political themes and politics tends to be magnified in societies emerging from civil wars. Mozambique is no different in this regard. During and after focus group sessions, participants expressed the scarcity of civic information among people yet to be reached by NDI.

We cannot deny that in areas where both civic education had occurred and where it had not, there was widespread dissatisfaction stemming from the impossibility of reaching the high expectations generated by the elections, and by inference the democratic process.

Differences in opinions are evidenced in the way participants confront, resolve and live with the difficulties of securing their collective well-being. Those who were participants in NDI programs generally respect an individual's rights, use peaceful solutions for problems, and recognize democratic participation as the principal tool to overcome their struggle.

Those who have not been exposed to NDI efforts reveal themselves to be indignant, disbelieving, resistant and, in a certain way, passive about their destiny. It is evident when reviewing participants' comments and attitudes that the fundamental difference between the groups was exposure to civic education.

This evidence leads us to validate the work being undertaken by NDI. The media used by NDI -- personal presentations by trusted non-partisan individuals, radio dramas and simple, easy to understand story boards -- are the proper channels to communicate these important topics.

The utilization of on-site district trainers who can reach into rural areas and meet directly with the population is vital. These trainers, as well as their provincial coordinators, are seen as good, honest people of goodwill who are, above all, non-partisan. This lends credibility to the trainers, principally

because they provide a service perceived as being extremely useful and necessary. Their work is also recognized as being very exhausting. There were numerous references to the long distances the trainers had to travel 'to come talk to us.' As they do not charge anything for their services, trainers are seen as a mixture of idealists, doctors, priests and teachers.

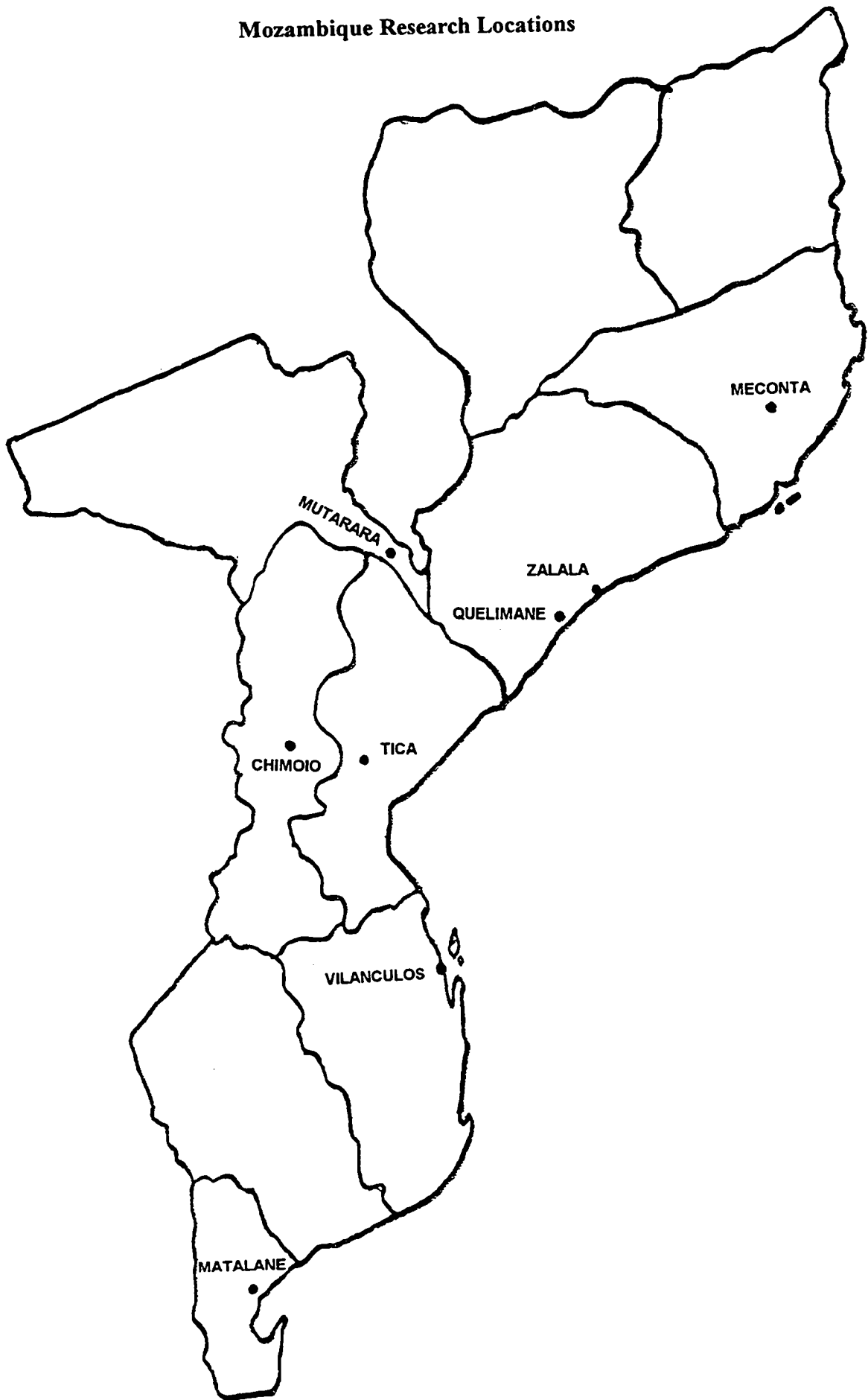
The greatest challenge presented is how to increase and support these programs to further democratic development. It remains obvious, to the researchers and to all those involved in the civic education project in Mozambique, that it is necessary to develop activities that utilize the most accessible and trusted means of communication.

Certainly, NDI should continue its use of on-site district trainers as these people are respected in the community and provide trusted information. However, NDI should also think about creating other programs complementary to the radio dramas, such as a news show or a feature reporting program. CLAIM would also suggest increasing the frequency of the radio dramas broadcast and a better targeting of broadcasting hours.

We cannot forget that we are researching a society with a long history of colonization and whose various generations have suffered under the paternalistic regimes characterized by socialist states. The participants frustrations with democracy, as they report them, are represented by their knowledge of generalized corruption, the high cost of living which provokes many daily hardships, the lack of social policies, and the lack of respect for elementary principles of citizenship. These aspects of Mozambican life and the resulting complaints are present in all areas of the research.

**CLAIM Focus Group Report
November 1996**

Mozambique Research Locations





**NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE**
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW Fifth Floor

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 328-3136

Fax: (202) 939-3166

e-mail: demos@ndi.org

<http://www.ndi.org>

