

# **Struggles in Peacetime**

Working with ex-combatants in Mozambique:  
their work, their frustrations and successes



**Netherlands institute for Southern Africa**

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## **1 Preface**

Form an image when you hear any of these words: “ex-combatant”, “war veteran”, “former combatant”, “ex-fighter” or “demobilised soldier”. Admit it: chances are that the imagery will not be very flattering. Due to their involvement in violence during the war, they are invariably portrayed as prone to violence and criminally inclined – in short, a menace to society in one form or another. Taken from a website relating to a publication on the Mozambican peace process, the following quote is quite telling: “Five years after the ending of the war, and three years after elections, many ex-fighters continue to nurse grievances due to the few economic opportunities open to them and the lack of recognition of their contribution to the war and the suffering they endured. This said, the process of reintegration has been relatively successful *and most fighters do not pose an immediate threat to their local communities.*”<sup>1</sup> One hardly ever comes across stories that tell a more complete picture. ‘*Struggles in Peacetime*’ is an attempt to do just that. Based on interviews with more than 40 former combatants in Mozambique and a number of other relevant actors, we want to begin answering some of the questions that hardly ever get asked: what do the lives of ex-combatants really look like? How are they coping in post-war society? What roles do they envisage for themselves in their communities or society at large? What are the actual roles they are already performing?

The interviews show that groups of former combatants are involved in conflict resolution, resolving personal and political tensions. Others campaign on public health issues or engage in voter education. Local initiatives, taken by some very remarkable people, have most definitely played their part in these developments. However, many of these activities take place in small, often rural localities, which means that they do not get noticed.

### **1.1 The Case of Mozambique**

The war in Mozambique ended in 1992. Since then, peace has been consolidated in a way that could be instructive for other nations that emerge from armed conflict.

What makes the Mozambique case even more interesting is the time frame. Usually, international interest in countries emerging from armed conflict evaporates after a few months – or when the first election has been duly pronounced “free and fair”. It is therefore precisely that mid-term perspective, 13 years after the war, that makes the Mozambican case so interesting, at the personal level of the ex-combatants’ lives and at the societal level of a country that has seen years of war and has successfully avoided a relapse.

### **1.2 Composition of the Book**

‘*Struggles in Peacetime*’ consists of three parts. The first part (chapter 2) gives a general outline on the role of ex-combatants as peace promoters in African countries, specifically South Africa. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> Italics by the authors.

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background to the topic. It has been written by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

The second part (chapter 3) contains the report of a series of interviews with ex-combatants in Mozambique, who work as peace promoters for ProPaz, the organisation largely responsible for the involvement of former combatants in peace building activities in Mozambique. Journalist Bram Posthumus speaks to them about the war, their life after the war and their work for ProPaz. The final part of this publication (chapter 4 and 5) offers conclusions and recommendations.

The people that were interviewed are all male and female ex-combatants, who have been fighting for either the government, Frelimo, or their opponents from Renamo. They come from three major regions in the country (the North, the Centre and the South). Some are based in the rural areas, some in cities. All but a very few are involved with ProPaz.

### **1.3 About ProPaz and NiZA's Human Rights and Peacebuilding Programme<sup>2</sup>**

ProPaz is one of the most active peacebuilding organisations in Mozambique. Its programmes involve ex-combatants in a range of activities such as locating arms depots and de-mining projects, as well as conflict resolution training and advocacy for peace in their communities. Besides the positive effects of the projects itself, one of the most important aspects of the work of ProPaz is the re-integration and reconciliation of ex-soldiers into the local communities. Former enemies are working together for peace.

ProPaz is one of the 24 partners of the Human Rights and Peace Building programme of the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA). This NiZA-programme focuses on peace building, access to justice, gender equality and civic education. Three of the four peacebuilding partners are associations of ex-combatants, who are actively involved in promoting non-violent conflict resolution at a community level.

We thank PSO for making funds available for the writing of this publication.

Bob van der Winden (Programme Director NiZA)  
Salomão Mungoi (Programme Officer ProPaz)

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<sup>2</sup> More information on ProPaz, NiZA and the other contributors, see chapter 6.

## **2 Ex-Combatants as Peacebuilders: Opportunities and Challenges**

By Hugo van der Merwe and Richard Smith (CSVV)<sup>3</sup>

Building peace in war-torn societies is a challenge requiring sustained and multi-pronged strategies. The struggle for peace takes on many forms and involves a wide range of proponents. An important question facing these societies is whether ex-combatants, who were once key participants in the conflict and are now commonly seen as a key stumbling block to peace, have the potential to become vital actors in building sustainable peace. The picture presented in this publication provides a refreshing new perspective on this question. It challenges common stereotypes, explores and introduces new local capacities for peace, and asks deeper questions about the meaning of peace in the communities torn apart by war and now fractured by ongoing social, political and economic injustices.

This introduction reflects on some of the key insights gained by the authors, all working for CSVV, during their work with ex-combatants and their communities, primarily in South Africa, but also informed by lessons from Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Burundi. It draws on the lessons emerging from our work in trauma counselling, in-depth research, community based peacebuilding initiatives, restorative justice and other empowerment projects.<sup>4</sup> While most of this work has been with liberation forces, a great deal of the picture painted here also reflects the experiences of government-aligned forces and of militias acting in pursuit of other complex motives.

This introduction, and the following chapters, have been inspired primarily by initiatives in Mozambique and South Africa, but also reflect the resilience of the ex-combatants from other countries and other contexts. Our hope is that it will provide insights into the complexity of formulating policies that impact positively on those we write about. And contribute to an understanding of the enormous potential that exists for violence to be transformed into peace.

### **2.1 Peacebuilding in a Context of Extended Conflict**

Peace practitioners from across the continent of Africa and around the world are beginning to gain more of a voice to articulate their own experiences of violence and their insights from transforming conflict and building peace. Much of this experience challenges conventional thinking and informs a growing number of peace activists committed to building a durable and lasting peace.<sup>5</sup>

Essential to these experiences is an understanding that peacebuilding goes beyond the signing of formal peace agreements. A peacebuilding process does not only mean

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<sup>3</sup> With additional input from CSVV staff members including Oupa Makhalemele, Bronwyn Harris, Sasha Gear, Moloko Malakalaka and Malose Langa.

<sup>4</sup> For more information: [www.csvv.org.za/](http://www.csvv.org.za/)

<sup>5</sup> ACTION for Conflict Transformation, *Transforming conflict, reflections of practitioners worldwide*, Phnom Penh: ActionAsia; Melville: Action Support Centre, 2003

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eradicating violence, but also building relationships informed by positive values and attitudes and supported by appropriate systems and structures.<sup>6</sup>

War and conflict do not just affect relations at national level. They also disrupt and reshape relationships between people and the systems they have developed at all levels of society. For a formal peace process to directly affect people's daily lives it has to be complemented with efforts strategised and implemented at community level (not just filtered down to them). This means building relationships with people at community level, between people and state institutions, between men and women, and between youth and elders.

Peacebuilding requires an understanding of the interrelated root causes of conflict, a clear assessment of the consequences of violence on society, and a shared vision of a future that reflects a set of values that have been collectively developed. This means building the capacity of people to analyse and reflect on the forces around them. These forces operate at different levels, within individuals, communities, countries and internationally. Based on analysis, people are able to develop insights, strategies, plans and actions. These strategies are rooted in people's own experience and understanding and inform actions that begin with the people themselves.

The effects of war on a society go much deeper than is commonly understood by those outside the local context. It brings about a deep transformation of identity, values, culture and understanding of the nature of self and society. War dictates a shift in identity that must allow people to differentiate "us" from "them" in a way that justifies killing "them." This process of dehumanisation of whole categories of people is not easily reversed by new political symbols of unity and reconciliation. War also requires a redefinition of social values that exist around killing. The transformation of a society to one that allows it to see killing in simple instrumentalist terms instead of as a moral dilemma, lies at the heart of how power, and access to it, have come to be understood as violence based. The ability to kill trumps almost all other forms of collective social mobilisation. This valorisation of strength and force becomes embedded in youth culture and social relations in various aspects of society. The violence that spills into communities as a result of war and triggers violence between individuals from different sides of a fractured community, also destroys people's sense of what it means to be a human being. Observing, being part of, or being affected by senseless or brutal killing undermines and devalues one's own life and strips society of meaning.

Recovering from years of conflict and war means dealing with the memory of war that dominates people's sense of self, their expectations of their neighbours (both friend and foe), their understanding of power and their ability to have hope for the future.

The challenge facing ex-combatants as participants in such a process of conflict transformation is as daunting as any other sector of society. Dominant models of

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<sup>6</sup> Fisher, Simon et al, *Working with conflict: skills and strategies for Action*. London: Zed Books, 2005, 3<sup>rd</sup> impr.

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addressing ex-combatants in “post-conflict” societies are deeply problematic.<sup>7</sup> The DDR model, composed of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration is generally one that treats ex-combatants as simply a threat. Ex-combatants are seen as a volatile flashpoint – people who can be re-mobilised if they are not disarmed and dispersed. They are also treated as a painful symptom of the violence that needs to be disinfected and normalised. The model essentially treats ex-combatants as if they are individualised cases of violence in a normal or peaceful society.

It is problematic in that the general focus is more on the technical processes of disarmament and demobilisation rather than the more complex and longer term processes of reintegration. The term reintegration is however, in itself problematic. It implies that the combatants have to undergo a transformation that will allow them to fit back in to a civilian society. This is not possible where the civilian society no longer exists, in the idealised sense of a pre-war harmonious collective, that can accept a reformed individual or returning war hero back into its midst. Where rehabilitation does occur it is mostly short-term and can often compound the problem by closing off avenues for further counselling and implying that any further trauma is now no longer legitimate.

In most contexts emerging from war and extreme violence, the stark poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities and access to resources, creates enormous tensions that affect the entire community, not just those with direct experience of armed combat. These conditions require enormous capacity to resist a reversion to war, and violence is still often seen as the easiest solution to the problem.

A peacebuilding approach to reintegration addresses the community as a whole (with its old and new divisions, tensions and identity, and relation to broader context), as well as recognising and addressing problems faced by individuals and particular groupings of people. Focusing on the ex-combatants alone holds the dual danger of stigmatising them as the cause of any problems, and initiating new tensions over how resources are distributed.

### **2.2 Who are Ex-Combatants?**

Ex-combatants<sup>8</sup> are far from a homogenous group. There are distinct experiences depending on different military formations and clear differences in experiences of formal members of military formations and informal combat units. These differences depend on a number of factors, including the extent to which combatants were fighting in formal or informal structures, for example in a government sponsored military formation such as the South African Defense Force or in informally established self

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<sup>7</sup> Gear, Sasha *Now that the war is over - ex-combatants transition and the question of violence: a literature review*. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, April 2005. - (Violence and Transition series; no. 9) [www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za)

<sup>8</sup> In South Africa, most ex-combatants prefer the term “veteran.” The term military veteran has however also been used at times to refer to a narrower group of ex-combatants – the more formal members of military structures.

The use of the term “ex-combatant” is thus used here as a more inclusive term referring to anybody who was directly involved in an armed formation during the conflict.



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defence units. Other differences in the region are between combatants who fought in the war for independence or were more involved in the civil war that followed. In Mozambique for example, a distinction is often made between former combatants who fought in the war of independence (*antigos combatentes*) and those who fought in the war between Frelimo and Renamo (*desmobilizados de guerra*).

Other differences depend on those who spent decades in exile and those who never left their local community. There are those who were involved in conventional wars, in guerilla attacks, or in local community battles. Some were tortured, injured or saw their colleagues and families killed; others committed horrific abuses. Some saw regular combat and lived lives wracked by intrigue, betrayal and suspicion; others spent months of boredom and frustration waiting for an opportunity to fight. Women were sometimes central figures in heroic battles and sometimes treated with disdain and severely abused by their supposed comrades. Some became soldiers when they were in their early teens without much schooling, some when they were mature adults with established careers. Some returned from war with the aspiration to return to a rural farming existence, others with ambitions to become political leaders or role-players in the modern economy.

Another key difference is the ideological background of combatants. In South Africa, for example, those who fought on opposite sides during the conflict had dramatically different understandings of the conflict in South Africa and different visions of the future. In Angola combatants fought on the side of UNITA or on that of the MPLA. In Zimbabwe there were ideological differences between those who fought on the side of ZANU and ZAPU. At the end of the war, these differences, however, appear less dramatic, but are still clearly present. This is highlighted by the example from Zimbabwe where a strong contingent of “war veterans” are strong supporters of the ruling ZANU-PF while other groups remain highly critical

In any context the range of experiences within a group of ex-combatants will be equally diverse and equally complex. These differences mean that projects by or for ex-combatants have serious challenges. Inclusiveness and representation are complex challenges in themselves. The range of psychological and social dynamics compounds these. Despite this, there are a surprising number of common aspirations and challenges amongst this diverse grouping.

While this publication presents a picture of hope and inspiration, it is essential that we also reflect briefly on the reality faced by ex-combatants – at least in terms of the South African situation. The painful truth is that most ex-combatants are disgruntled, feel alienated and unrecognised, and live lives characterised by social and economic marginalisation. This picture is, it seems, reflective of many contexts in Africa.

### **2.3 Challenges Facing Ex-Combatants in South Africa**

To briefly review challenges faced by combatants returning to civilian life in a post-war society, we frame them in terms of economic, social and psychological challenges.

### **Economic Challenges**

Most ex-combatants in South Africa are economically worse off than the rest of the population. They suffer from high levels of unemployment and lack access to proper housing, and other services. The high level of unemployment stems largely from their lack of formal education and marketable skills, and is further hampered by discrimination against them by employers who are averse to employing people with combat experience.<sup>9</sup>

Ex-combatants received limited assistance with re-skilling when they were demobilised, and such programmes are generally recognised as having been abject failures (even by the Ministry of Defence). Many ex-combatants went into exile or joined the military structures before they finished their schooling. This sacrifice for the struggle for liberation is, they feel, not being recognised.

The lump sum payments they received upon demobilisation have long since disappeared without a significant lasting impact on their lives. Many ex-combatants did not qualify for the special pensions granted by the democratic government (due to age, length of service, or type of military formation they joined), and many have struggled unsuccessfully to prove their military credentials.

The high unemployment rate in South Africa (around 40%) presents a bleak prospect for those who face these challenges. We have also come across accounts from ex-combatants relating to the difficulties in dealing with work environments that differ so much from the military environment to which that they are used, particularly the nature of inter-personal dynamics and the systems of authority. Simple technical skills are often not sufficient to equip someone from a military background for a modern work environment and its accompanying emphasis on individualism.

### **Social and Political Challenges**

Ex-combatants tend to face social stigmatisation in their communities and society as a whole. They are sometimes viewed as prone to violence, unstable and potential criminals. At the same time they are revered by most people as liberators of the country. This respect mixed with fear, places them in a very ambiguous position in their communities. In some communities they have found themselves in positions of leadership and respect, while in others they are seen as outsiders because of their long absence. While most try to put their military experience behind them, some communities expect them to step back into a military-type role and use force to protect the community against a criminal onslaught.

Many ex-combatants have had a difficult time fitting back into their families. Some of their roles in the family have often been taken over by another family member, and re-negotiating new roles and ways of relating are sometimes very difficult. Ex-combatants

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<sup>9</sup> For details of a survey of ex-combatants' present circumstances see: Mashike, Lephophotho and Mafole Mokalobe, "The reintegration into civilian life: the case of former MK and APLA combatants". Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Centre for Conflict Resolution. In: *Track Two* - Vol 12, No. 1 and 2 (Sep. 2003)  
ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za

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regularly feel that those around them have no understanding or appreciation of what they have experienced and continue to suffer as a result – something that is further compounded by the secrecy that usually shrouds military activities in war.

Government has also dealt with ex-combatants as a group in a very ambiguous manner. On one hand, they recognise their contribution in speeches and ceremonies, while on the other, they seem to keep them at arms length when it comes to consultation in policy and service delivery. Predominantly, as a group, they do not feel that they have an effective voice in politics or that they have effective channels to communicate with government departments or politicians.

This is highlighted in the conclusion of a research report by Sasha Gear in which she states: ‘At the level of broader society, mechanisms to assist with the reintegration of ex-combatants are apparently either absent, inadequate or failing. Rather than the development of support mechanisms to facilitate the stressful process, exclusionary, and sometimes conflictual, relations are produced or reproduced.’<sup>10</sup>

### **Psychological Challenges**

Within the war situation, combatants had a sense of pride in their self-image and public presentation as courageous, committed and strong members of society. Although some of this pride and recognition remains, it is a challenge to find new sources of self-respect and public recognition in a society driven by materialist interests, especially where they struggle to fulfill the new role as breadwinner, their self-image is seriously affected.

Their belief in the political goals of their movement gave them a deep sense of purpose and community. While the liberation movement supposedly won the battle, a sense of despondency about the lack of transformation of society is common. Many ex-combatants feel that their leaders have betrayed the struggle as so little has changed in the daily lives of their communities.

While militarisation emphasised the “masculine” identity of male soldiers, valuing their fortitude and strength, a family environment calls on very different attributes and skills. Communication and conflict handling skills learned in the military are often inappropriate and need to be seriously adapted in a civilian context. Similarly, returning women ex-combatants have usually taken on roles that are at odds with those traditionally expected of them, and frequently face particular reintegration challenges and stigmatisation as a result. Ex-combatants are, however, generally expected to fit back into civilian life and adapt, without support or preparation for the numerous complex dynamics they encounter.

Many combatants experienced direct trauma as victims of, witnesses to, or as direct actors in violence. This trauma manifests itself in many ways including PTSD symptoms (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and sometimes also elements of guilt or

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<sup>10</sup> Sasha Gear, *Wishing Us Away: Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa*. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, April 2005. – (Violence and Transition series; no 9)

shame about their involvement in these acts of violence. Drug and alcohol abuse is not uncommon among ex-combatants in South Africa – seemingly as an attempt to escape unpleasant realities, the stresses of transition and uncomfortable memories and in an attempt to make new lives for themselves.

## **2.4 Risk of Further Violence**

Much of what is outlined above in terms of the challenges does raise the question of whether ex-combatants are susceptible to future violence. This question is initially asked in relation to fears about a breakdown in the peace process whereby soldiers can be remobilised to continue the war (or use violence during election campaigns). Secondly, it is asked in relation to ex-combatant involvement in new forms of violence, particularly when a “post-conflict” society experiences high levels of violent crime.

These questions should not be dismissed. However, the problem of high levels of violent crime (domestic violence, criminal violence, political violence, vigilante violence, etc.) in countries recovering from war cannot be blamed on ex-combatants. As outlined earlier, the effects of war are devastating on many aspects of social and political life, which destroy the social fabric of communities. Ex-combatants are not the cause of the disruption and violence. They are however vulnerable to being drawn in as role-players because of their skills, their social and economic exclusion and their political alienation.

While the challenges and risks specific to ex-combatants are very serious, there is, at the same time hope and space for creative solutions that minimise any risks which contribute to the broader climate of violence.

## **2.5 Ex-Combatants as Peacebuilders**

Ex-combatants have often taken initiatives themselves to transform their lives and that of the communities they live in. This reflects both the personal beliefs of the individual ex-combatants and often draws from the very combat experiences that resulted in their traumatised and marginalisation.

It is often ex-combatants that play a lead role in building enough confidence amongst displaced communities for them to return and who provide the workforce that begins to rebuild the destroyed villages. In Sierra Leone it is ex-combatants who have organised themselves into collective efforts aimed at beginning the development process. In Angola, ex-combatants play a role in drawing attention to the social welfare needs of child-soldiers and those disabled or destitute as a result of war.

Ex-combatants have also not been passive in the democratic South Africa. There are innumerable examples of initiatives (both individual and collective) that have pursued personal development, sought economic, social and life skills, addressed conflicts constructively, and engaged with the political process to transform the situation. There are also a number of NGOs who have engaged ex-combatants in addressing these challenges, often with very significant successes.

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More significantly, ex-combatants have not only engaged in activities to uplift themselves, they have also taken on roles as peacebuilders in their own communities and more broadly in society. They have been involved in, among others,:

- efforts, to uplift their communities through social and economic development projects
- formal and informal efforts to protect communities against crime
- processes of mediation and conflict resolution among community members
- and efforts to advocate for social justice in the face of continued inequality in our society

A commitment to social justice, transformation and economic rights that motivates people to join armed formations can also drive efforts to promote social change.

Most ex-combatants are very passionate about contributing to their communities. Where they have been treated with suspicion due to their past acts or long absence, they have been willing to make sacrifices to re-establish themselves as respected community members.

While they may lack certain technical skills relevant to civilian life, many of the experiences of ex-combatants who served in the military have also equipped them in positive ways:

- Their experience of working in a team is probably unrivaled by other work environments. Their commitment to colleagues and ability to combine competition with collaboration is highly developed
- Many have strong leadership experience, which includes planning, organising and motivational skills
- Some have developed strong public speaking and training/teaching skills
- Self discipline and respect for a clear system of authority is central to most military structures<sup>11</sup>

At a social and personal level, ex-combatants have remarkable resources to draw on in promoting peacebuilding initiatives. Those who have confronted their own personal trauma and engaged in a process of reconciliation with their erstwhile enemies have a first-hand experience of the process that the rest of society still largely needs to confront and fully understand. Two ex-combatants, from different sides of a war, now working together to address social problems, is an extremely powerful symbol. It is both a personal reflection of the potential for healing, as well as, a powerful social statement about a new common agenda for change.

Ex-combatants have first hand, intimate experiences of violence. They can provide insights into its effects, dangers and impact on people's lives that is stark and real. Their stories and visceral personal experiences are a very strong testimony in any attempt to educate youth or engage in public discussions about how to build non-violent solutions to social problems.

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<sup>11</sup> This is particularly true of liberation movements such as Umkhonto we Sizwe, Frelimo and government controlled forces, but perhaps less so of rebel movements such as the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone.

Ex-combatants are far more than simply fighters; they are often social activists with a strong understanding of the nature and causes of social injustice. They are often the carriers of a social memory of struggle, taking on the role of preserving the history of the struggle against injustice. This history of struggle and its relevance for education around individual and collective rights is critical in society's attempts to make sense of its past. It is also the key in interpreting lessons for a society that has not shed the burdens of inequality and impoverishment.

## **2.6 Sharing Experiences among African Countries**

South Africa does not, on the whole, present a successful case study of ex-combatant reintegration or community level reconciliation in the wake of apartheid oppression. In much of our work in this regard, we have looked to our neighbours and other countries on the continent for lessons and inspiration.

The ex-combatant reintegration sector in South Africa is very underdeveloped. While there are many examples of exciting initiatives, these have not been effectively documented and evaluated to see how they can be adapted and replicated. The network among NGOs and ex-combatant associations is also very weak, which means that experiences are not effectively shared and few collaborative initiatives are developed. There is also not a clear common agenda for advocacy in relation to government policy or service delivery.

Regional networking has the potential for not just sharing experiences and inspiring new initiatives, but also for demonstrating new ways of collaborating and building partnerships among ex-combatant structures, between ex-combatant structures and NGOs and among all stakeholders in the sector. As will be shown in the examples that follow, Mozambican examples of sharing experiences with ex-combatants from other contexts have proved a useful exercise, rich in learning. Efforts to organise ex-combatants from across the region should provide an even richer pool of learning and a useful platform for articulating ex-combatant needs.

The examples presented here and further in the publication provide essential evidence of the potential to develop peacebuilding strategies that build on the enormous resilience and essential capacity of a group that society cannot afford to marginalise. Practitioners, policy makers and governments all have an essential role to play in helping to realise this potential. While the common challenges of eradicating poverty and violence, and transforming relationships, systems and structures, are daunting, without integrated strategies that address these challenges, the durability of peace will always be threatened.

### **3 Struggles in Peacetime**

By Bram Posthumus

#### **3.1 The Background of the Wars**

There were two wars in Mozambique between 1964 and 1992. The first was the war for national Independence. It pitted the armed forces of the former colonial power, Portugal, against the troops of Frelimo (*Frente para a Libertação de Moçambique*). Frelimo started out as an essentially left-leaning nationalist movement that was supported by the former Soviet Union and other so-called Eastern Bloc countries. It later adopted, and then again later rejected, Marxism-Leninism as its guiding ideology. Once in power, Frelimo's economic policies have always been more pragmatic than they have been given credit for. Mozambique's independence was triggered by a military coup in Portugal, in 1974, which removed one of the last remaining fascist regimes on European soil and paved the way for democracy. The most important complaint of the young officers ousting the Portuguese government was the persistence of colonial wars in Mozambique, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau and even Timor Leste (former East Timor). Most of these countries, including Mozambique, achieved independence in 1975.

The end of the war for independence was, unfortunately, not followed by a period of national construction and peace. In the mid-1970s, the geopolitical makeup of southern Africa was decidedly negative towards newly independent states with progressive governments, even more so when these governments began lending support for liberation movements in the two countries that had yet to shed colonial rule: Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and apartheid-South Africa. The response came in the form of "counter insurgency": units of fighters specifically trained to destabilise the target country. The MNR (Mozambique National Resistance, later localised into Renamo, *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique*) was set up in Rhodesia, and following that country's move towards majority rule in 1980 it was taken over by the security establishment in South Africa. Renamo made its entry into Mozambique in 1976 and this was followed by 16 years of - often very brutal - civil war.

But the term "civil war" is a misnomer in this case, as the war was clearly exported to Mozambique. Later, the armed conflict did develop local roots and a local discourse, as local grudges and issues became intertwined with the war. At the national level, the discourse went very much along the lines of Frelimo's "Defending the country and the Revolution" versus Renamo's "Fight for Democracy". As Paciência Manjate (48), a former Frelimo soldier, explains: 'We went into the villages and throughout the land to defend it against the international aggressors and counterrevolutionaries. Yes, it was a very ideological time.' Jordão Mbualambuanda (45) spent ten years (1984-1994) on the side of Renamo in rural Mozambique and especially in and around Maringué. This is the former General Headquarters of Renamo and still a controversial place. Jordão concurs with Paciência: 'I was a political commissar. My job was to explain to people why there was war. Mind you, there was only one way of thinking about this; disagreeing with the party line was not an option. At least, now we have the freedom to

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disagree. We have democracy now, new ideas. And we are certainly no longer interested in the way we used to live.'

War has never been a man's business alone and in Mozambique there were many women fighting what they considered the right war. As Paciência Manjate explains: 'Yes, women certainly would fight for their ideals as citizens of a new nation. Our great example was Josina Machel, who was right in the middle of our struggle for Independence.' Manjate does not claim special status on account of her gender. 'There was no special treatment, good or bad, meted out to women. After all, everybody could die. This was war.' Men, women and children were targets for recruitment drives; substantial numbers of former combatants started their military careers by being taken from village paths or neighbourhood streets – or being called up for military service. João Cebola Amisse (40) remembers: 'I went to school in the Nacala District and one day in 1988 a notice was put up on the wall. It had my name on it. So I knew my time was up, I had to go into military service. Military service was introduced in 1980, because of the war, and there was no opting out.' Lídia Manguenze Huó (35) was going about her everyday business of walking to and from school and helping out on the land in Inhambane when she was kidnapped by Renamo in 1987. 'It was certainly not voluntary. I wanted to be a doctor.' Her military career was cut short within a year, when she stepped on a landmine and lost her right leg. Frelimo soldiers rescued her and took her to a hospital, where it was amputated. She now has an artificial leg. It would be another 10 years before she would finally see her family again. However, some did go voluntarily, like Santos Samuel (46). 'I went into the government army in 1977. I felt it was a good way of gaining work experience and learning a trade.'

That was certainly part of the experience, but it was war and there is general agreement that those 16 years were terrible for everyone. Augusta Joaquim Marimira (34), who fought for Renamo, describes some of the hardships. 'When we were in the bush, there was a lot of hunger and very few medicines. In Maringué, where I was for a long time, a lot of people died from starvation. It was tough, very very tough.' Armando Messitera Muharu (37), who also fought for Renamo, recalls the distances he had to travel. 'We were just walking, all the time. We easily covered up to a thousand kilometres in four months carrying up to 35 kilos of arms' (see Annex: Life Story Armando Muharu). Jordão Mbualambuanda recalls the isolation. 'Life was difficult here. You really had nowhere to go, once here. This place, Maringué, was completely isolated. Getting food was especially difficult, you had to rely on others.' The situation was the same on both sides: battles, long periods of waiting, long marches, never enough food and the constant threat of death and disease.

In basic terms, the war in Mozambique was an armed conflict between two conventionally organised armed forces. For instance, both sides in the war received training at a British army base in the Zimbabwean town of Nyanga. Renamo was trained there before Ian Smith's Rhodesia became Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, in April 1980. Then Frelimo trained at the same base. The conventional nature of the armies is an important point to bear in mind, as the question of training and fitting into an order and a hierarchy is vital in understanding perceptions and behaviours of former combatants later in life.



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Combined efforts at mediation were made by large numbers of individuals and institutions, at one point or other including the Kenyan government, the Roman Catholic Church and even the late business tycoon and Lonrho boss Roland ‘Tiny’ Rowland.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the General Peace Accord was signed on October 4, 1992, after protracted negotiations in Rome, under the aegis of a Roman Catholic lay community called San Egidio.

There was widespread euphoria when the war ended. Families were finally able to be reunited, after many years of having to live with the fear that one, or more, of their loved ones may have perished. Augusta Joaquim Marimira remembers ‘a big party’ in Beira, when she finally came home. There were such parties, the length and breadth of the country.

How do you meet the former enemy? Well, it seems that the ex-combatants were remarkably down to earth about this. This is Cardeal’s description of the first meeting: ‘Well, you walk up to them and you say: “Good day, my friend, how are you?” They respond and that is basically it.’ Armando Messitera Muharu is equally straightforward. ‘Well, first of all you realise that the war is over. And it is up to us, soldiers, to show that this really is so. That is precisely what we did with AMODEG.<sup>13</sup> Together with ONUMOZ<sup>14</sup> we were now, as former enemies, acting jointly. This is important for the people: seeing is believing, that’s right.’ It is indeed remarkable to see former enemies working together, first within the organisations that were set up to defend the interests of all former combatants and then later within ProPaz - and being entirely natural about it. A point that will be returned to later, as this does not in any way suggest that generalised amnesia was achieved while doing this.

The most difficult part, when the war had finally ended, was to get families reunited. Everyone interviewed for this paper cites this as the most pernicious problem immediately after the war. The following example is typical. Augusta Joaquim Marimira remembers that her father did not want to speak to her because she had fought “on the other side”. His daughter’s role in the military would have been marginally more acceptable if, at least, she had had the good sense to fight on the “correct” side. Judite Julia dos Santos (34) who spent 11 years with Renamo between 1983 and 1994 remembers an uncle who flatly refused to even acknowledge her existence. ‘He was a *chefe de poste* in Angoche and to him all Renamo people were simply bandits. Eventually, we started talking again but it took a lot of persuading by other members of the family and a lot of time.’ Paulo Andrasson Vinte (45), who was born in Maringué but now lives in an apartment close to the centre of Mozambique’s second city Beira, cites another reason why getting families to reintegrate is tricky. ‘Because you had been separated from your families for such a long time, it was natural to forge new bonds, most likely with your immediate colleagues. We did not really have complete families any more. So, the people you were with all the time in the military became your new

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<sup>12</sup> The London and Rhodesian Mining Company (Lonrho) had its origins in mining. Under Rowland the company became a conglomerate, dealing in distribution, newspapers, hotels, and other lines of business.

<sup>13</sup> *Associação Moçambicana dos Desmobilizados de Guerra* AMODEG is an organisation that would represent the interests of former combatants from the civil war. See also the chapter “Associations of former combatants”.

<sup>14</sup> *Operação das Nações Unidas em Moçambique*, the UN peacekeeping operation in Mozambique.

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family.’ Paulo’s point is a crucial one: an important part of the design of many UN peace missions has been based on the theory that ex-combatants need and want to go to their regions of origin. In fact, this may not be a good strategy at all during the initial post-war stages. At the end of the day, it is up to the former combatants themselves to decide where they want to stay and they may well have very valid reasons to *not* want to return to their original homes.

Most former combatants were demobilised in 1993 and 1994, when Mozambique was in effect run by ONUMOZ. The demobilisation stories themselves are told fairly quickly. Francisco Randinho (43), for instance, who was on the Frelimo side, simply said: ‘I was demobilised, got my three months’ subsidy and my government pension because I had spent more than 10 years in the army.’ Augusta Joaquim Marimira was sent home from her demobilisation area and got her three months’ ONUMOZ package. That was pretty much it. Still, many ex-combatants want to be on record saying what an excellent job was done by the UN and this is in spite of the bad press and, indeed, some serious scandals. Paulo Andrasson Vinte says: ‘ONUMOZ has done a lot of good. They paid our demobilisation fees, but they also helped a lot in rebuilding. They had projects that have been very positive and you can even say that, in a sense, ProPaz has emerged from the work of ONUMOZ.’ However, ONUMOZ comes in for criticism as well. Santos Samuel thinks there was too little follow-up. ‘It is true, a lot of people have learned very useful things but there was no development going on. You give a fellow money, he throws it away – and then: nothing. Or you give someone an education but then there are no opportunities to put into practice what you have learned. A lot of people just crossed their arms and said: I’ll wait.’ And many of them are still waiting, in circumstances that range from the manageable to the unliveable.

What was also missing was a real ground breaking policy of national reconciliation and peace promotion. As ProPaz points out in its own publication, the government went on with the business of reintegrating the ex-combatants into a new army and told society at large that “Nothing happened in the past – but we must forget it anyway”.<sup>15</sup> This hardly sets the stage for an exercise in which past deeds are acknowledged and effectively dealt with. The politicians decided that it was now all history – and the former fighters were decreed “reintegrated”. As the document puts it: “...the politicians decided that the violent memories of the young soldiers could be expunged in the name of national reconciliation...” As a result, frustrations abounded among the former combatants. Some fled into drugs and alcohol, violence at home became a problem and a few resorted to using the arms that they had hidden just in case, in the bush. And the political establishments, now reunited in the corridors of power in the capital, continued to live in wealth and denial.

### 3.2 Life after the War

Meanwhile, how has life been for the ex-combatants after the war? They were more than willing to paint the picture. Lídia Manguenze Huó is now a mother of three children

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<sup>15</sup> Associação Instituto de Promoção da Paz - ProPaz, *Ex-combatentes: experiências de reconciliação e paz nas comunidades* (Maputo: ProPaz, 2002)

Available in English: Veteran soldiers: experiences of reconciliation and peace in the community  
[www.propaz.org.mz](http://www.propaz.org.mz)

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(10, 5 and 3 years) and living in Maputo. She owns a sewing machine – but it is broken. Normally, it could provide her with some income but right now life is not kind at all. Judite Julia dos Santos lives in Nametil and has three children, who all go to school at a cost of 350,000 meticalais (€12). She lives from what her field brings in, which is not sufficient even if the rains are good. Ana Bela Angelo, who sat in on a meeting with AMODEG in Nampula but is not part of ProPaz, described her post war life as ‘troublesome and chaotic’. There are no projects, we need to study and become literate and when we start looking for (male) partners who would want to help us, there are none!’ This last sentiment was repeated by quite a few women, including Alice Elias Zaque Cuinica (42), a former political worker for Frelimo who met her husband in the army.’

Even though a lot of the former combatants have returned to live in rural settings the trek to the cities has been considerable. João Cebola Amisse grew up in Nampula. ‘This was a tiny dot of a town before the war. If you were African you could not take part in town life during the colonial days, so that also kept it small. But what really changed this place was the 16 years’ war.’ During the interview, we were sitting on the rooftop terrace of a local hotel when he pointed to the south. ‘You see that neighbourhood over there? That was bush. And it’s like that everywhere here.’ Although the centre has not shed its small-time colonial town feel, Nampula is home to some 350,000 people.

In the rural areas, life is agriculture. Like many others, Jordão Mbualambuanda owns a piece of land, ‘I have a family, a house, a *machamba* (plot of land for farming), so normally I am not too badly off. This year is bad because it has not rained and food that comes from outside is extremely expensive. We now have a food for work programme here that is managed by the government. Which is fine because it is managed in such a way that conflicts don’t arise. Next year, when the rains return, I am confident that we will have enough again. But for now, it’s precarious, what with my family plus other family members and my new three months’ old twins?’

The town of Nametil, just over an hour’s drive from Nampula, is pretty typical. It has a central avenue that runs right through the centre and clearly has seen better days. Heaps of sand lay in the middle of the road, suggesting ongoing or future repair works. The town lies in a large cotton and cashew growing area. But the only thing that has come to this area recently has been a cashew processing plant, a renewal really, as there already was one dating back to colonial days. As the international financing institutions have decided that packaging cashew nuts – and thus adding more value – is best done in India, Mozambique is exporting unpackaged cashew nuts across the Indian Ocean, although the country could easily do this itself. Poor infrastructure is partly to blame for that. The road to Nametil from Nampula ranges in quality from excellent to appalling. But even with excellent roads, investment does not travel to local rural communities, even if they grow quality cotton. So the means for actually making a good profit from the land are very limited indeed. This is a problem that touches everyone, ex-military and those who have always been civilians.

Many of the former combatants were either taken out of school when their names appeared on government draft issues, or were abducted by Renamo troops. A truncated education is the result and some see this as a serious handicap. This is reflected in the

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eagerness with which they send their own children to school. The fact that a boy or girl is not able to attend class from a lack of money, is seen as a major defeat by many of the ex-combatants that were interviewed.

### Useful Skills from the Military

What was learnt in the military that is still useful now? While even ex-combatants themselves have differing opinions about how much of their knowledge, skills and experience gained in the military can be used outside it, they all agree on the fact that society ignores their experiences and makes insufficient use of it. A very important case in this point – certainly in the case of Mozambique - is landmines. Many former combatants have useful information and skills concerning the planting of mines and the removal of them. (See Annex: Unused Landmine Expertise)

Paciência Manjate adds a number of other things. ‘The military training had a number of aspects that I consider useful: we were taught technical and logistical skills, as well as political and psychological faculties that have proved very useful.’ Similarly, Augusta Joaquim Marimira thinks that the logistical skills she acquired during her time in the field, plus her communication and intelligence work can still be useful outside the military system. Judite Julia dos Santos and her fellow ProPaz peace promoter Acacio Gavela in Nametil both worked in the health services of their respective armies and clearly think that the skills they acquired there could be successfully employed in civil life. Lucas Paulinho Amanda sees the advantages in how he learnt to be very practical, much in the way that medical personnel reacts to an emergency. You learn not to be too preoccupied with your own emotions or to get lost in endless questions as to what caused a situation to occur in the first place. ‘You learn to find solutions for practical problems.’

However, there is more; Francisco Randinho mentions the word *convivência*, the ability to communicate and work with others. This is the lesson that life in the military taught him. Tapera Filipe Masube (46), who has had a long career in the government armed forces, including the Special Forces, thinks that the ability he acquired, to speak to large crowds of people without stage fright, helps him now, especially with the work he is doing with ProPaz in the communities. ‘It gives you a certain degree of authority. All those who have been political commissar have that skill. So now you can use that skill in a non-military way, without arms around.’ Alice Elias Zaque Cuinica agrees: ‘I think I can still use the skills I learned during my political training. Explaining, I am very good at that.’

### Unemployment and Stigmatisation

Logistics, bookkeeping, car mechanics, masonry, health care and knowledge about placing, disarming and removing landmines were all cited as transferable to civilian life. Although not each and every skill that has been learnt can be thus transferred. Having been a battalion secretary, for instance, does not really provide any benefits later and a life in the infantry does not produce good career prospects in a post-military life. But the trouble is that even those with transferable skills do not find paid employment and paid employment is what people are after. This is a very Mozambican distinction. *Emprego* (employment) implies working for money in a regular job. This must be distinguished from *trabalho* (work) which you may do on your land or as a

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self-employed non-wage slave, but it does not provide you with the respectability that comes with *emprego*. The economy is cited as the main reason why no employment has been forthcoming for former combatants but they feel there is some discrimination, subtle and not-so-subtle, at work here as well.

Unemployment is the single most important social and economic problem outside the extreme south of Mozambique. But former combatants may have additional issues to deal with, which makes it even more difficult for them to earn a living. Among them is the aggressive behaviour of ex-combatants when they were demobilised and, secondly the unwillingness of the communities where they live to accept them.

João Cebola Amisse said: ‘Many of the ex-combatants were very aggressive coming out of demobilisation. They fought the police and they were unruly. But now that you have laws and norms that have been created to solve this problem, that is pretty much gone. You will not see many ex-combatants in criminal or violent behaviour. You just had to bring back that respect for the law, make them sensitive again to the rules, after all that’s what they are used to.’

Jordão Mbualambuanda, who lives in Maringué but comes from Marromeu in another district, knows that settling down in a community that is not your own is not always that easy. Ex-combatants have been subject to verbal abuse, as in: we don’t want you to stay here, you cannot own land here, go home... ‘There’s a lot of mistrust and bad blood at times.’ Is there anything to remedy this? ProPaz peace promoters will tell you often that there is: simply tell the truth, tell people about yourself.

### **Disability and Health Issues**

Lídia Manguenze Huó thinks there is a lot of ignorance and neglect regarding military landmine victims like herself. ‘A lot of people receive no help but many don’t even know that there is a solution for them.’ To make matters worse for her, there are now problems in the prosthesis workshop that was formerly run by the Red Cross. She is blunt in her assessment of management since government took over: ‘Since the Ministry has taken charge of the workshop there have been problems. It is very badly organised and when we come for repairs or replacements, there is usually no material.’ Artificial limbs need maintenance and sometimes replacements; if not, they can cause serious damage to the person using them.

In more general terms, health is a concern for many former combatants – as it is, indeed, for the majority of Mozambicans. Amina Maquina (39) fought – involuntarily – for the government side between 1988 and 1992 and lost her hand. She is married and lives with her family in Namialo, in the province of Nampula, just over an hour’s drive from the provincial capital. She paints a bleak picture of health care in her town. ‘It boils down to this: if you have money, you get taken care of. If you don’t, then hard luck. The children here are frequently ill. They suffer from malaria, diarrhoea and the like. If you are very ill, you must find a way to get to Nampula. If you are lucky enough to get transport means you need to pay twice: first to get to Nampula and then to see a doctor there.’

### **Coming to Terms with the Experiences<sup>16</sup>**

Many former combatants need time to come to terms with what has happened to them, in a political environment that basically denies anything took place at all and a community that is frequently unwelcoming. (See Annex: Life Story Paciência Manjate)

There are varying degrees of success too, although people do not see it as such. Cardeal (39), like many others, owns a piece of land, where he grows vegetables, cassava and other crops, for consumption and for the market. He considers himself very much a self-made man and what he has constitutes *trabalho*. As was already mentioned, but merits repeating, this type of work does not equal employment on the acceptance scale – even if “the work” is a lot harder – and sometimes a lot more profitable – than *emprego*, (employment). But that is the way people see things here.

### **3.3 Associations of Ex-Combatants**

Out of the 1992 peace accord, two organisations emerged that were specifically designed to defend the interest of demobilised fighters. They were AMODEG, an organisation that represent the interests of all former combatants from the 1976-1992 war and ADEMIMO (*Associação dos Deficientes Militares e Paramilitares de Moçambique*), for those who had been injured and handicapped during the fighting. Membership was open to both sides of the conflict: Frelimo and Renamo. As time went on, they jointly developed a Peace Promotion and Development Programme, the precursor to ProPaz.

A main bone of contention has been the payment of pensions. In principle, there are two different criteria for applying for pensions: the first one only includes former Frelimo soldiers and is paid out to people who spent ten or more years in the army. The second criteria covers both Renamo and Frelimo ex-combatants who have been injured during the war. This is the equivalent of a disability pension. However, payment of these pensions is extremely slow and has, in too many cases, not been forthcoming at all. Part of the problem could be that the affairs of the *desmobilizadas da guerra* is managed by two ministries, Finance & Planning and National Defence, the first of which is responsible for payouts. Ex-combatants were scathing about the way the payment of their pensions has been handled so far. As for the reasons, they were only prepared to say that they thought that the Ministry of National Defence had organised matters very badly indeed. But quite possibly the reasons are, as so often, political.

Interestingly enough, Renamo considers the issue of the demobilised soldiers of the 1976-1992 war a political issue; Frelimo sees it mainly as an administrative thing. The comments from the Nampula delegates for both parties speak volumes. Gloria Salvador, who is one of the vice presidents of the provincial delegation in Nampula for Renamo, explains that her party has a few projects here and there for ex-combatants but there is not a great deal of money for these projects. She complains that Renamo is excluded from all major projects, as these are run by the government. She wonders why and considers the plight of the former combatants a major problem. By contrast, Lourenço Sabonete, Frelimo’s secretary for mobilisation simply refers to the two ministries that

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<sup>16</sup> The term “trauma” has problematic connotations, which fall beyond the scope of this publication. Chief among them is that the term is stigmatising in and of itself, which should impede its current liberal use.

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run the payment of the *desmobilizados de guerra*. ‘There is no difference of opinion between Frelimo and Renamo about the support that should be given to these former combatants. Besides, we have all become Mozambicans now; we are all citizens of the same country, so it should not be an issue.’

AMODEG begs to differ. The pensions issue remains blocked at the Ministry of National Defence and the reason is that the government, contrary to what the ruling party would have us believe, does make a distinction between Renamo and Frelimo soldiers. As Fernando Nicuaulu, the provincial secretary for AMODEG in Nampula puts it: ‘Basically, the government does not like to see Frelimo and Renamo working together in one organisation. There are many in the administrative system who consider that a “betrayal”. And yet the problems of the ex-combatants have not gone away. They still face these in terms of reintegration. They do not have jobs, the money problems never go away and the projects that were designed with them in mind have only been put on paper but have never been executed.’ Unfortunately, neither of the two organisations involved has the clout or the financial foundation to seriously lobby the government about these issues, which probably suits the government just fine. To be fair, AMODEG does not really believe it inspires much confidence on the Renamo side anyway. What it boils down to is an old, but certainly not exclusively Mozambican case, of politicians mistrusting the military. Ana Bela Angelo has to laugh heartily when asked if she thinks the politicians are scared of ex-combatants who are getting organised. ‘Scared? No, I don’t think so. But they don’t trust us...’

### Government Action for Former Combatants

There is a Ministry for Former Combatants that takes care of those who fought in the war of independence against the Portuguese. The Ministry pays these veterans their pensions for the rest of their lives and takes care of their families if they die. The objective of the ministry is to reintegrate the former combatants from the war of independence into society: economically, socially and culturally. Alberto Caisse, vice director of the *Direcção Provincial para os Assuntos de Antigos Combatentes*<sup>17</sup> is convinced that this objective has, by and large, been realised. ‘Yes I think the government is reaching its objectives. It is always prepared to assist the former combatants in any way it can. After all, these are the people who have liberated our country! But they had nothing after they had helped to throw the foreigners out, so this Ministry was created especially for them. But we also encourage them to set up their own associations, start small businesses and shops and make their own money.’ Asked whether the Ministry had any plans to admit veterans from the other war into the fold, the answer was brief: ‘No. There are no plans to do this. People try this all the time, to get into our pension schemes while they are not *antigos combatentes*. But we always say no.’

In terms of the post-1992 period, the General Peace Accord provided for the establishment of a national reintegration programme, which looked at the absence of civil unrest and the full participation of the former soldiers in community activities as its main objectives. Within the Mozambican Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR) large quantities of small arms were taken out of

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<sup>17</sup> Provincial Directorate for Issues Relating to Former Combatants

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circulation and some 30,000 former combatants received practical skills training. Its success can be attributed to a whole range of factors that go far beyond the scope and purpose of this paper. But chief among them are the general war-wariness of almost all Mozambicans and regional support for the disarmament efforts, especially from South Africa.

Clearly, DDR is not the resounding success it has been made out to be, as arms caches continue to be found until today and the skills training programs were very often inappropriate. According to ProPaz the DDR-programme failed for a very practical reason: the programmes and courses offered had nothing to do with the reality in which the former combatants found themselves. For instance some were trained to be an electrician in an area without current, a fishermen in a landlocked community or shopkeeper in an area where there was nothing to sell. Moreover the DDR programme was based on the false premise that if nothing was done the former combatants would return to war.

With hindsight, one can easily see that a series of reintegration programmes, mostly designed by urban-based bureaucrats and an international donor community that is equally far removed from the realities of most peoples' lives, is bound to fail if the ideas, opinions and ambitions of the designated group of beneficiaries are not taken into account. They certainly did not, in any measure, address the problems with which former combatants were faced after their demobilisation. It is a mistake that the former combatants do not want to see repeated, now that they are getting organised in peace promoting circles at three levels: local, national and regional. Once bitten, twice shy.

### **3.4 The Workings of ProPaz**

#### **How it all began**

ProPaz (Programme for the Promotion of Peace) emerged as a response to the fact that both reintegration and peacebuilding were stalling in Mozambique. Existing, usually foreigner-designed reintegration programmes were failing; former combatants were left isolated and frustrated, conflicts continued to surface in their communities. As noted earlier, was advanced in rhetoric, hardly in practice.

ProPaz was set up by members from AMODEG and ADEMIMO in 1996 to address these issues. As its own documentation puts it: '...clearly, rebuilding peace is a matter of urgency. Not a formal peace that has limitations but a creative and constructive peace...that is based on the recognition of history and the dynamics of armed conflict.' A world away from the proclaimed amnesia, alluded to earlier. ProPaz thinks that former combatants are uniquely placed to help bring this new recognition about and thus can help to consolidate already existing peace initiatives, build upon them from the ground up – and bring about real integration of former combatants.

To this end, new initiatives for peacebuilding with former combatants were created. ProPaz has maintained three main lines of work, from the beginning: support for local development, the active participation of women – as was the case during the wars – and a focus on local conflict resolution. In terms of organisation, there is a Board of Directors and an Executive Directorate lead by an Executive Director supported by four staff, located in the central office in Maputo. At the provincial level there are co-



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ordinators who lead the five teams that make up the provincial Trainers. Finally there are district promoters who work in the communities. These are permanently receiving training from the provincial trainers, which makes the peace promoters' work possible. All of these are former combatants. In 1998, ProPaz started to group prominent people in communities to form the Conflict Resolution Community Groups (a forum of individuals who by vocation deal with conflicts in communities). These include *regulos* (traditional leaders), representatives of political parties, traditional healers, elders in the communities, religious leaders and members from the peace promoters team. The idea is to gradually transfer the idea of peace promotion to the ownership of the community. Selection criteria that ProPaz uses to have people incorporated in its work are (among others): an interest in peace promotion, good community leadership and communication skills.

One problem ProPaz has, is of course dealing with recruits who have had a violent past, especially when violence against civilians was involved. How do they deal with that? João Cebola Amisse is very straightforward here. 'Listen, integration of people in a group of peace promoters is serious and honest work. So if we are confronted with people who have had a violent past, we talk! There is dialogue. You have done something as an individual, and so you will have this dialogue as an individual. This is beyond politics or anything else. Politics has its own time. You must deal with the issues of violence, from person to person.' It is a non-judgemental attitude that many non-Mozambicans may find puzzling but in the specific mindset of this country, the practical application of what is, in essence, a form of restorative justice, does what is required: reconcile, bring people together who were formerly separated, and heal individuals and society.

This is not to say that ProPaz has not had its fair share of troubles. Of course, there have been promoters with disciplinary problems, who had to be dismissed. Others did not fit into groups and teams and decided to leave. Other problems persist as well and these will be focused on later. However, it is safe to say that where ProPaz has been a presence, and especially over longer periods of time, its impact has been considerable.

### In the Field

How the groups of peace promoters got together in the first place follows the Mozambican logic of the two sides meeting after the war, the activities of AMODEG and ADEMIMO and the remarkable ease with which people find each other at a personal level. ProPaz insists on a 50-50 balance between former Renamo and Frelimo soldiers, or as close as you can get. How the individual members of the group then went on to gel as a unit is a fairly universal story: workshops, talks, exchanges of experiences, and once that is settled, the orientation moves outwards, to the communities. 'It was all rather easy,' said Judite Julia dos Santos, 'Everybody was pretty fed up with the war anyway, plus the fact that we were getting together for ProPaz made things even easier.' João Cebola Amisse partly agrees. 'Well, things were not always very easy at the beginning. We really needed to learn a lot but we were also driven by our desire to communicate for peace. We also had visitors from abroad, ex-combatants from Nicaragua for instance, who told us about how things had been done in their countries. And, certainly, the fact that many of us had already been involved in AMODEG and ADEMIMO also helped a great deal.'

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Getting into the communities requires presenting your group to the local authorities. The structures are strictly hierarchical and virtually nothing gets done in local communities without the say-so of the *administrador*, or, when working at provincial level, the *governador*. Lídia Manguze Huó explains the process. ‘In the districts, you ask for an appointment with the *administrador*. You will be asked to come for an audience and then you can explain directly what it is you have come to do.’ Most of these audiences are very courteous affairs and the level of acceptance, at local level, of what ProPaz stands for and is planning to do, is high. When a new *administrador* is appointed, a frequent occurrence, ProPaz peace promoters make appointments for an audience and take the opportunity to present themselves.<sup>18</sup> This is done eloquently: public speaking was one of the skills many of the promoters took home from the military and these types of discourse usually cement relationships with the local authorities quickly, as they employ the same rhetorical means.

Not only are the local authorities engaged. All ProPaz groups also mentioned other important leaders, without whom working in their district or city would have been very difficult. These include the traditional leaders and frequently also religious leaders.

What follows the official introduction is an event known as a *palestra*, basically a long presentation in the community. Jordão Mbualambuanda has held many of these and it may consist of a theatre piece, a poem or two or question and answer sessions. ‘We always take our time. Local communities must have the time to respond to whatever we say to them. And respond they do. Lídia Manguze Huó: ‘Usually people come up with things like: “There are demobilised people in our village. We cannot live with ex-soldiers because...” and then they will say things like: because he supported Renamo or Frelimo and all sorts of reasons.’ An excellent way to counter this, it has been found, is by having a simple presentation of the ProPaz team, which is always judiciously composed of representatives from both the former adversaries. In Jordão’s memory, the positive responses outnumber the negative ones: ‘Once people know why we are here and what we plan to do, they welcome us and support our ideas about freedom, our stand against discrimination and our support for education and equality between men and women.’ This approach was repeated everywhere, from Maringué to Matutuíne, usually after long conversations: the best weapon is the truth, not only when seeking acceptance in a community at an individual level but also when introducing ProPaz and its work. In an environment where political obfuscation is the norm, stating your case as clearly as you can is, in all probability, the best way to gain confidence among the communities where you want to work.

### Types of Conflicts

#### *Land*

The absolute number one conflict area in communities in Mozambique is over land. As in many other parts of (southern) Africa, there is no reliable registration system that says who owns what. Title is determined in the best-case scenario by mutual consultation between parties and sometimes by fights. This is in spite of the fact that

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<sup>18</sup> During the three weeks of this field visit, one *administrador* had just been replaced, another was about to leave and a third was having his farewell party.

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Mozambique does have a *Lei da Terra* (Land Law) that is an honest and intelligent attempt to combine traditional African ownership systems with the modern, title-based system required to make an economy grow. The devil is, of course, in the actual implementation on the ground and the lack of means to have it properly executed. And so, too many post-war deaths are due to fights over land ownership. In all of the communities visited, ProPaz groups have been busy trying to reconcile people who are disputing ownership of land. The ProPaz group in Nametil explained in some details how this is done.

‘We go to the contested area and we try to cultivate understanding between the two people who claim ownership. Usually, we use mediation through a third person. These could be their good friends or relatives with whom they get on well. So in order to be successful, you need to know whose good books the contestants are in. If at first we don’t succeed, try, try, try again. And again, if need be, with other friends. We always look for other ways to solve the issue peacefully and you just never stop talking. It takes a lot of time.’

ProPaz documents a similar case, also in Nampula Province, where two families disputed a piece of land that according to one side in the conflict had been taken unjustly. The suggestion to bring in ProPaz came from one of the family members involved. The local peace promoters first spoke to each family separately, then devised a solution, which, after much debate was accepted as the most equitable one.

### *Personal and Domestic Problems*

At home, spousal abuse, infidelity and the abuse of alcohol are fairly common problems that can at times lead to divorce. ProPaz’s peace promoters frequently mediate between quarrelling spouses and/or their families (who often have a stake in fomenting or perpetuating the domestic conflict). The behaviour of children is also often an issue that gives rise to conflicts. Once again, mediation involves repeated talking sessions until the issue is resolved.

As was mentioned earlier, divided families are one of the most pernicious heritages of this war. In this and other cases, peace promoters go about doing their work in ways that do not fundamentally differ from how they have formed their own groups, come to terms with their own pasts and have found ways of working together with the former “brother enemy” as peace promoters. Their own experiences send the most eloquent educational message of how to peacefully resolve your conflicts.

### *Labour Conflicts*

Ponta de Ouro, near the small town of Matutuíne, in southern Mozambique, is a holiday resort. The people who work there mostly come from Matutuíne, and other localities including Zitundo and Ponta de Ouro itself. The main contention is not against the presence of resorts; they are a source of welcome employment. The problem is the trampling on workers’ rights. Ponta d’Ouro is run by (unidentified) foreign owners who clearly have scant regard for the labour laws obtaining in Mozambique. They have been deliberately vague about terms and duration of labour contracts. People were sacked without severance pay. At one point, the workers organised a strike against this clearly illegal practice and then Propaz was asked to intervene. The peace promoters managed

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to talk to both workers and management and also got them to negotiate. While the basically unlawful contract situation appears to persist, at least some of those who were fired got their pay and this labour conflict was resolved peacefully.

There are quite a number of similar conflicts up and down the country, involving employers who have yet to come to terms with 21<sup>st</sup> century labour relations. Here, ProPaz's work is coming close to that of a trade union's. However, trade unions in Mozambique are quite weak (the heritage of a socialist one party state) and workers' rights all too frequently come last. At the national level, ProPaz leads an initiative of peacebuilding related organisations known as REDEPAZ (*Rede de Edificação de Paz em Moçambique*), of which the national trade union is a member.

### *Dealing with Anti-social Behaviour*

In Moamba, there is a neighbourhood notorious for its bad behaviour among young people. Marijuana is smoked in quantities together with the consumption of an illicit drink with an extremely high alcohol percentage, known in Moamba as *tontonto*. This concoction is known under various names e.g. *cabeza de velho* (the old man's head) in the Manica province, central Mozambique.

This particular part of Maomba is known for its high levels of criminality; theft and robbery. All parties agreed that something had to be done, as even the police did not want to enter this area. One of the things ProPaz has attempted to do is to see if the parents could be engaged, without antagonising them, as it could easily be concluded that the parents are to blame for the fact that the youths are out of control. This is patently the case but saying so in public would not help matters in Moamba. Progress is slow, but the principle of the matter is that if you do not politicise the situation but work together to try to find practical solutions, you will get better results in the end. Or, if you do politicise the issue, make sure the leaders of the influential parties in that region come together to approach the issue. This approach is, in fact, being tried for the first time now in Moamba: ProPaz recently involved the leaders of Frelimo and Renamo political parties as participants in a group of peace promoters.

Youth issues are a perennial concern for ProPaz members at all levels. ProPaz director, Jacinta Jorge, wonders why so many youths find the use of violence so completely natural. 'We were taught restraint, also in the military. I find this attitude among our youth astounding, especially given a history like ours.' Santos Samuel has the same line of reasoning. 'We must do something about our youth. It is a major problem: drug taking, unemployment and a ready acceptance of violence. Still, I also know of plenty who are trying their best to set up small enterprises, associations etc. But we do have a core problem here with some of them.'

### *Political Violence and Threats of it*

João Cebola Amisse recalls a story from the Angoche district, where there was a real danger of the resentments stemming from the war boiling over and becoming open armed violence. 'We composed a team, which contained members of both parties. We talked. And we were able to turn the violent situation in that particular community around. What you have there now is the rule of law, the idea that everyone has civil and civic rights, the sense that resorting to violence is wrong.' In this particular case,

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Renamo refused to work with the police, because it was thought that the police should have supplied the area with law enforcement officers. This is the same logic that created the Inhaminga and Mocímboa da Praia problems we shall refer to later: one political party believes it has the right to dominate all institutions, because it has strong political following in an area but the other political party contests this idea. (See chapter 3.5) This politicisation of institutions that should be above politics is a major source of conflict. This happens on a small scale in Mozambique, but on a much larger scale in other countries, such as Zimbabwe.

Other conflicts where ProPaz has documented interventions by one of its local groups are cases of theft, corrupt behaviour by disabled former combatants at a local hospital, false accusations (a very powerful means of marginalizing people in some communities), and other social conflicts. What all these actions appear to have in common is an educational aspect: all the peace promoters who were talked to for this report said that they were there to educate people about ways to solve conflicts peacefully, behave socially, and so forth.

### *The Illegal Circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons*

There are arms caches in various communities up and down the country. These were left behind at the time of the peace accords and are frequently protected by landmines. They are kept as a kind of security fallback, just in case things go politically wrong once again. Now that war has become a highly remote possibility, these caches tend to be forgotten. Still, some former combatants may know about these caches and those who do remember are faced with a dilemma: if they tell the police about them – which is legally the most obvious course of action - they will immediately be accused of having something to do with them. This is a very unenviable position to be in, especially in an environment where the police are not necessarily always your friend. An unintended consequence is that these caches are, at times, discovered by criminals who proceed to use them on the streets of Maputo and Beira and elsewhere, threatening people and their assets. This was the case in Moamba and Matutuíne. Both are close to South Africa, a highly lucrative market, including one for stolen goods. Armed criminals went through these districts during the evening and stole hundreds of cattle that were sold later as meat in the big cities of Maputo – or indeed Johannesburg, a few hours drive away.

In the first district ProPaz embarked on a campaign of sensitisation, collection and destruction of arms after the community had identified arms circulation as a major threat to peace. In the second district, as Cardeal puts it, ‘there are small arms circulation linked with criminal activities such as car smuggling to and from KwaZulu Natal, in South Africa. Cattle theft and poaching in the Maputo Game Reserve that are also our concern. We have now set up an arms collection project where we work with other organisations and the police. Those who give information are given small rewards like bicycles and zinc material for roofing their homes’.

In the southern Province of Maputo, ProPaz was involved in arms collection to such an extent that it ended up as a partner to the regional operation Rachel, a major cross border crime busting operation that involves the police forces from Mozambique and South Africa.

### **Civic Activism: Your Health and Your Vote**

'Ill health is a form of war,' says Paulinho Manuel Tavorava (44), formerly fighting for Frelimo and now battling disease in Nametil. 'We do general education about hygiene in hospitals, we talk about the importance of keeping your drinking water away from other water, and we talk about AIDS, certainly.' Clearly, education goes much beyond the immediate scope of promoting non-violence. Health education was cited by many ex-combatants as a very important issue, as was voter education. This last is vital in election campaign times, when politicians rediscover their electorate. Clear, unambiguous information, as opposed to political rhetoric helps people to make informed choices about why to vote and what to look out for when casting their ballot. ProPaz began these intervention in civic education after workshop sessions revealed that electoral violence (throwing stones at adversary caravans and the burning of party flags) were sources of violence in pre-elections. Post-election violence is another major cause for concern, a topic we shall return to shortly.

### **Regional Exchange**

In southern Africa ProPaz is working towards building a regional structure of former combatants. Many know each other very well, if only from the fact that they may well have trained together in former Eastern Europe and found common cause in the anti-imperialist struggles of the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

In Angola there is Preocupaz, a fledgling ProPaz-style organisation. In Zimbabwe ex-combatants have set up an alternative war veterans movement - consisting of war vets who refuse to be co-opted into the corrupt political system in Zimbabwe. There have been regional workshops and meetings with ex-combatants from Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and elsewhere. In December 2002, just before the Angolan Peace agreement, ProPaz had already organised a peace training workshop for members of ANDA-Angola. The workshop also included refugees from the Great Lakes region who had organised themselves in a small Association called International Family of Peace. Just as the visits to Northern Ireland, Nicaragua and elsewhere have helped form the visions of the Mozambicans who continue to drive ProPaz, they would like to pass on their experience to other similar groups in the region. Interestingly enough during the field visit for this publication quite a few former combatants mentioned that the politicisation of the war veterans as in Zimbabwe, the co-optation of their leadership and the violence that has since been inflicted on the Zimbabwean citizens – could not happen in Mozambique. 'We are no longer interested in politics, we are interested in projects,' as one of them put it very succinctly.

### **Some Difficulties**

All this does not mean that there are no difficulties. One of the main issues is the fact that working as a peace promoter is voluntary. Most peace promoters and trainers do their work out of heartfelt volition but some feel hard done by. One group took it upon itself to voice a number of deep-seated frustrations, which included the fact that there was a dearth of material: no bicycles to do the community rounds and "make information travel" as one promoter put it. Neither is there transport between the provincial centres, where some of ProPaz's co-ordinators are situated, and the outlying

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districts, some of which are well over 100 kilometres away on bad roads. Having your own means of transport is obviously quite vital in districts that have no public transport system, very bad roads and are the size of London. It is noteworthy that ProPaz has, so far, not ventured into the very remote areas that are difficult to reach by road.

Another practical issue that was raised involved the absence of writing material for producing reports or the absence of an office, although this last was most keenly felt in towns. At a more interpersonal level, it was felt that there was a large (and growing) distance between the local peace promoters and the head office in the capital. One such group of peace promoters that work in ProPaz's name urgently wanted to know whether ProPaz was still interested in their existence, a matter that could be resolved by a visit of the national director. It was even suggested that they could still carry on with that work – but then as an independent group.

Some of these problems are the result of the fact that organisations like ProPaz rely on donors, which can be notoriously inflexible bureaucracies. Donor money is usually earmarked, which makes flexible use virtually impossible in places where flexibility and the capacity to improvise are vital survival skills. It is a disconnection between local realities in the recipient country and the paper virtual reality in the various donor offices around the world. This is sometimes reinforced by local representatives who lack the finesse to become connected to those field realities and retain sound judgement. It is a problem that has existed for as long as development aid has existed and it is far beyond the scope of this paper to offer solutions. However local peace promoters in Mozambique would clearly be helped tremendously if relatively minor sums could be made fungible, then short-term practical problems can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

### **3.5 No Threats to Peace, but a lot of bad Rhetoric**

These efforts at local conflict resolution, civic education and general community development take place against a national backdrop, in which, unsurprisingly, political responsibility takes a backseat when it comes to producing a good soundbite. Recent incidents, culled from the local press while this reporter was there, include a threat by Renamo to return to the bush at Maringué if a certain number of its officers were not reinstated in the army forthwith.<sup>19</sup> Renamo alleged that a discriminatory hiring and – more to the point – firing was taking place in the new army and that its officers were the unwilling victims of this practice. It even stated an ultimatum. Later, army generals – especially those who had been part of Renamo previously – stated, quite correctly, that the army is not there to be politicised by whoever is running with such an agenda and that procedure, not politics, takes precedence. Of course, Renamo did not even need to retract the threat, as no-one really believes that a return to war is an option for anyone. The Renamo political and military leadership – this time it was a general who issued the threat – has a long history of griping and grousing, and some of this has been quite justified too. It almost routinely complains about elections results, electoral fraud, access to media, discrimination in the new army and much more. This has gone on for so long that most people have become immune to it. For example, the previously

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<sup>19</sup> Mozambique reconstructed its army after 1992 and this new army consists of fighters from both sides in the 16 years war.

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mentioned debate, started by Renamo leadership, about the national symbols. (see Annex: Life Story Paciência Manjate)

Another threat, which is primarily a local one but one that could have some national ramifications if not kept in check, is local abuse of power, mostly committed by Frelimo. Elements within the party are of a mindset that simply believes this party “owns” the country, because it delivered Mozambique from colonial rule. Any contestation of that fact is seen as an insult, or a threat. While this is historically correct, it can make for some high level of arrogance and riding roughshod over people who may not tow that particular party line is one part of it. There has been, for instance, a series of incidents in a place called Inhaminga, where Frelimo, by dint of sheer political logic dominates the police and government bureaucracies because it won the elections there. The incident involved the shooting, by the Rapid Intervention Force, of a member of the so-called Presidential Guard of Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, who had a house there. The man was on a private visit. The Frelimo leadership immediately covered the police action and said that the presence of Dhlakama’s bodyguards posed a threat and caused insecurity in the area. There are accounts stating that these self-appointed Presidential Guards are indeed a destabilising force in central Mozambique and regularly beat up and threaten government officials. But in this particular case, eyewitnesses said that the shooting was unprovoked. What this does is four things. Firstly, it politicises issues that are completely personal in nature. It appears that the person shot was simply visiting relatives and had no ulterior motive for being in Inhaminga that night. Secondly, the action raises unnecessary tensions, following as it does on a similar incident in August 2004, when another of Dhlakama’s guards was shot in a similar fashion and got interpreted by the police as yet another act of political thuggery by Dhlakama’s guards. Then, as now, full-scale escalation was only just prevented from spinning seriously out of control. Thirdly, it provides Renamo with political ammunition and proof that there is real abuse of power going on. Fourthly, the knee-jerk reaction from those who hold administrative power immunises Frelimo from much needed reform that would loosen up ossified bureaucracies and allow for political and social tolerance to take root. One thing all this does not do is provide a solution. ProPaz activists in other parts of the country, particularly Maringué, said that they would love to start working in Inhaminga and another flashpoint, Mocímboa da Praia.

In a broader sense, political manipulations from the top are a threat to local efforts at peacebuilding and consolidation. In this, Mozambique is far from unique: earlier we made a reference to Sierra Leone, where political irresponsibility (indeed: often calculated misbehaviour) threatens efforts at peace consolidation taking place in localities up and down the country. In the case of Mozambique, the political machinations at the top do not pose a threat to peace, in spite of the rhetoric, but they can undermine local communities quite seriously. This is what happened in Mocímboa da Praia in the Cabo Delgado province. Early September 2005, at least 11 people were killed and almost 50 were injured following an outburst of violence. The occasion was the protest installation of the “new leader” for that locality, a Renamo candidate who had lost the elections for the post four months previously. Renamo claims the elections were a fraud. Fights broke out between supporters of Renamo and Frelimo, who says it had duly won the elections in Mocímboa da Praia. Accusations flew back and forth about violence, police brutality – even the number of dead became a political football:



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Renamo played the number down, Frelimo did the exact opposite. All this had nothing whatsoever to do with the problems that exist on the ground in Mocímboa da Praia; the violence and all the unrest was orchestrated from higher levels and probably ex-combatants were involved. While it is true that vote rigging is widespread, two things stand out in cases such as these: the violence that ensues solves nothing and the local circumstances that are ostensibly addressed by these violent actions remain exactly the same.

While the absence of a national reconciliation policy will not lead the country back to war, some of the problems could be far more effectively dealt with if there were a clear government commitment to creative and constructive peace that ProPaz has referred to as one of its objectives. It was interesting to see this discussed in ProPaz's main office in Maputo by three representatives from ProPaz in Moamba, Jorge Francisco Mondlane, who joined the Renamo political party after the war, Benjamin Roberto Albino Mondlane and Vicente Fenigs Nhambe, both Frelimo members. Benjamin Mondlane maintains that the kind of harmony you create at the community level must eventually also be created at provincial and national levels. 'It can indeed occur that politics distract from the fact that the problems we are dealing with are, in fact, the same.' Such as the problems of the unruly neighbourhood in Moamba, described earlier. It is a process that requires some learning, as Jorge Mondlane explains: 'Before, you did not really have a local government. There were no political parties and therefore no election campaigns. The situation was quite simple: government structures were the same as those of the ruling party.' But this learning process is moving along fine in Moamba, where all three take part in the campaigns for their respective parties, engage in some political skulduggery before election time but remain good friends when times return to normal again. Here, the personal is not political at all – one supersedes the other.

## **4 A Final Word**

By NiZA, ProPaz and CSVR

The previous chapters provide a picture of the lives of ex-combatants, their background and roles in their communities. At this point, we would like to mention a number of assumptions about the position of ex-combatants after the war, which distort and limit our ability to design effective intervention strategies. In doing this, we intend to point out crucial elements that move us forward, away from the negative images with which most of us approach those who have used violence.

### **4.1 Ex-Combatants - Assumptions**

Of particular importance is the need to interrogate the assumptions about ex-combatants that appear to have informed past policies of donors, governments, but also society in general. This must include questions around the validity of these assumptions, their relevance to the people they refer to and the impact these assumptions have on the usefulness of policy.

#### **Ex-Combatants and Violence**

The most important stereotype is that ex-combatants are more prone to violence and more inclined towards criminality than others. This is a common trait among people living in countries that have lived through wars – but equally common among the international (donor) community and is commonly expressed through phraseologies such as, “to prevent former military from lapsing into violence” or “to ensure former combatants do not get involved in renewed warlike situations”. ProPaz argues that part of the training for both sides during the war in Mozambique involved using restraint when employing a weapon – if only because of the very practical point that there was a limit to the amount of ammunition available in a battle situation. As Jacinta Jorge of ProPaz points out: ‘There is a great discipline among the military in the use of arms. This is to do with army discipline and respect for hierarchy.’ In other words: without denying the violent acts that have been committed during the war, the chances of a former soldier going on a path of violent crime after the war, are much smaller than generally believed.

Nevertheless, even recent history has shown that the politicisation of ex-combatants can pose a real threat to peace. In Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique there are significant numbers of former combatants, who fought for previous regimes, current governments or rebel movements. Often those in power perceive organised war veterans as threatening, especially when their regime is unstable. But ex-combatants can also be abused and manipulated by these (local) powers. For example, members of ProPaz have referred to the tense situation in Inhamainga and Mocímboa da Praia in September 2005. (See chapter 3.5)

However, the following story from Zimbabwe is even more illustrative. The key to understanding the demise of Zimbabwe is the fact that back in 1997, the Mugabe government perceived ex-combatants as a serious threat. That year, Mugabe was

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shouted down at the commemoration of Independence and the headquarters of ZANU-PF were looted. The “war vets”, as they became commonly known, had been languishing in appalling conditions for years, while the “fat cats” grew ever fatter. The late Chenjerai ‘Hitler’ Hunzvi, and others acting in what some describe as an unscrupulous manner, gelled this into a potent political force. Mugabe acted to try and use generous handouts and a promise of political power to placate the ‘war vets’ and divert their perceived threat. Both these acts had negative and detrimental effects on the country, both economically and in terms of its ability to govern effectively. Note that in this case it was the actions of government in reaction to the ‘war vets’, rather than the ex-combatants themselves that caused the problem. The failure to holistically address the social and economic needs of a key constituency, and the politicisation of this constituency, lies at the root of the conflicts that arose.

### **Needs of Ex-Combatants**

Another favourite, especially among donors, is that all ex-combatants want work and they all want to go home. But in reality, for various reasons, many of them have stayed in the area where they were last deployed. They may have acquired a piece of land there, found a spouse, or have been away from any other place for so long, that it simply no longer made any sense to move back to wherever “home” was supposed to be.

Such assumptions not only lead to misguided policies on the part of the international community, but also to wrong and even dangerous local policies. Numerous examples can be listed; the mass transport projects, work projects, courses that spring up everywhere and offer neither usable nor transferable skills at the end, and plenty more besides. Jacinta Jorge: ‘It is not the work per se that matters: ex-combatants will get reintegrated into their society by the recognition of the work they do as peace promoters and a lot besides, not the other way around.’ In other words: work in itself does not lead to reintegration, as is often assumed; recognition of what you are worth as an ex-combatant however will provide an avenue towards that recognition. Then there is a practical problem too: the success of reintegration-through-work cannot be dependent on a country's economic performance in generating those jobs. This lack of jobs is part of the problem in the case of Mozambique. Becoming a respected member of family and community once again, requires a lot more than paid employment. Even though many of the ex-combatants interviewed here, view a job as a very important aspect of reintegration, it is certainly not the only one.

### **Diversity of Ex-Combatants**

It is imperative not to view ex-combatants as a homogeneous group and design one-size-fits-all policies. There is no real category of people known as “ex-combatants”. The diversity of ex-combatants and their specific needs and vastly different contexts, require far richer, diversified and flexible policies that are responsive to these different articulated needs. One of the female ex-combatants stresses, that there was no special treatment for women combatants during the war. But afterwards they face other challenges and have different needs than their male colleagues.

One of the distinctive features of ex combatants in southern Africa is that most of them have been trained during varying periods of time and in varying degrees of intensity and

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can therefore not easily be compared to the ill-disciplined looting gangs, that have roamed Liberia and its neighbours since 1989. One may even question, whether the war experiences in the Democratic Republic of Congo bear any resemblance to what has been going on in the rest of southern Africa. What the Mozambican ex-combatants have been stressing is the fact that they were trained to be restrained when applying violence. Obviously, this has not always been the case, as strategies of excessive cruelty against civilians have been used during the civil war in Mozambique.

### **Unused Skills of Ex-Combatants**

Often, the expertise of ex-combatants is not used to the extent to which it is available. This could include military skills that can be demilitarised, like de-mining, working as a unit and providing leadership to communities and large groups of people. While even ex-combatants themselves have differing opinions about how much of their knowledge, skills and experience gained in the military can be used outside it, they all agree on the fact that society ignores their experiences and makes insufficient use of it. A very important case in point - certainly in the case of Mozambique - is landmines.

Closely related to this, is the issue of money. Given the poor financial situation that most ex-combatants are in, and given the fact that jobs are few and far between in Mozambique, it would be useful to devise a method, in which ex-combatants could be paid for expertise and information provided. ProPaz is looking into ways of getting this on the agenda.

## **4.2 Opportunities as Peace Promoters**

Having said a lot about the assumptions concerning the needs of war veterans, what can we learn from the Mozambican example of ProPaz?

### **Develop Peacebuilding Skills**

The work of ProPaz has shown that authorities – be it the national government or international donors - should develop policies that go beyond making use of the existing skills of ex-combatants. Policies should also enable ex-soldiers to play a role in consolidating peace and managing tensions within communities. This is a constructive way to reduce both the levels of violence and the potential for tensions to escalate. Education programmes aimed at building on what is already there, and which include dissemination and sharing of initiatives undertaken by ex-combatants themselves, would enhance this process. Experience and expertise of ex-combatants can be used very well in local communities for purposes of conflict prevention and resolution. It is not a panacea, but some of it has certainly proved its worth, as the numerous examples of ProPaz have shown.

### **Regional Exchange**

The potential to share experiences across southern Africa and enrich and diversify the pool of experiential learning amongst ex-combatants, should be encouraged and reinforced. The context differs from one country to another, from a well-developed and sophisticated NGO sector (South Africa), to a small and fledgling civil society sector (Angola) or a battered down one (Zimbabwe). All this has a bearing on a regional ex-

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combatant network that offers alternatives to reduce the levels of (institutionalised) violence in the various societies of the region.

### **Donor Support**

Institutional inflexibility can be problematic, especially when simple and direct requirements of local peace promoters are at stake. This is even more so in remote areas where both donors and the national head office are felt to be very far away indeed. Civil society, that is working with mobilising and organising ex-combatants, needs to be well organised. Support structures that link ex-combatants at national level, with those working in more remote parts of the region, needs to be strengthened. For example, the local ProPaz groups would be tremendously helped if the ties between them and the national head office were more frequently confirmed as existing and important. Flexibility of donors to support these processes is of great importance.

### *NiZA*

In the years to come, NiZA will continue to support ProPaz and similar initiatives in the Region. Regional exchange and co-operation will play a major role. Even though the conflicts and processes towards peace are different between countries, much can be shared. Working in this field is complex and challenging, as is always the case in peacebuilding, however it is very important to pay attention to and support this particular group in processes of reconciliation.

## **5 Recommendations**

By NiZA

From the previous chapters it is clear that a number of key policy shifts need to take place. Without these shifts institutions involved in ex-combatants reintegration policies, will struggle to impact positively on the lives of those they are intended to benefit.

These recommendations are meant for governments dealing with ex-combatants, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Commission and the international and national civil society organisations active in the field of peacebuilding and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.

### **Peacebuilding is a Long-term Commitment**

- Realise that peacebuilding goes beyond the signing of the formal peace agreement and requires a long-term commitment to social transformation.
- Realise that peace agreements, or a truce, do not usually signal a fresh start for ordinary people, but do signal a situation change following a violent conflict. The consequences of the war still need to be addressed in a way that recognises that the nature of the conflict dictates the path of peacebuilding.
- Accept that the - often idealised - pre-war society has disappeared forever, and a new society needs to be built. At the same time therefore, one should realise that the reintegration of an ex-combatant into the society does not mean a return to the known, but is part of the process of creating a new society.
- In peacebuilding policies be aware that without integrated strategies on poverty eradication, violence and reintegration of ex-combatants the durability of peace will always be threatened. See democratisation processes of a country as an integral part of building society after conflict.
- Accept and realise that the effects of war on a society go much deeper than is commonly understood by outsiders, and that the complexity of local dynamics means that local experiences and local involvement in peacebuilding is a necessity.
- Design inclusive peacebuilding policies that take into account the communities as a whole and be careful not to further isolate ex-combatants from these communities.

### **Recognise Local Civil Society**

- Recognise that sustainable peace can only be achieved if those who were involved in acts of violence during war are part of the peace and reconciliation processes without disregarding the committed human rights violations.
- Accept that during war and times of violent conflict nobody is neutral. Furthermore there is no such thing as a neutral civil society. Acknowledging and engaging with the effects of war and violence is a necessary part of an aware civil society.
- International civil society should accept that nobody was neutral during the violent conflict and sustainable peace can only be reached if all actors are

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included in the construction of post war society. Selecting stakeholders in a project should be sensitive to this and carefully look at who is included and excluded.

- Local civil society (churches, women's groups and local leaders) should play a major role in reconciliation processes at community level, where former enemies have to learn to live together again and come to terms with the past.

### **Provide Long-term Support for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants**

- Expand the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) activities from the short term more technical processes of disarmament and demobilisation, to a long-term process of reintegration. Short-term incentives (such as training and financial support) are a good start, but fail to take into account the need for broader social transformation. They do not deal with the challenges ex-combatants face in the longer term, such as stigmatisation and exclusion from society.
- Not view ex-combatants as a homogenous grouping that would benefit from a one-size-fits-all policy, but provide diversified tactics that also pay special attention to the needs of child soldiers, women and disabled ex-combatants.
- Abuse, sexual violence and the impact on female ex-combatants requires specific attention. The non traditional gender roles played by women during times of violence also needs to be taken into account and needs to inform policy in this regard.
- Realise that becoming a respected member of family and community once again, requires more than a job and to realise that a lot of ex-combatants do not have a place to return to at all.
- Recognise the skills of ex-combatants - such as leadership qualities, work discipline, team work - and assist them with applying them to civilian life.
- Make use of the existing expertise of ex-combatants; for instance in de-mining and information on arms supplies.

### **Adjust the Image of Ex-Combatants and Accredite their Role in Peacebuilding**

- Stop seeing ex-combatants solely as perpetrators of war and threats to the often fragile peace, as is often the starting point in DDR-models. Adopt a new model wherein ex-combatants are perceived as people who can educate others about the war and can, in this way, play a role in building peace. Those who have experienced war at first-hand and are engaged in processes of reconciliation with their former enemies, are key in promoting peace in communities at local level.
- Not automatically fear the democratic organisation of ex-combatants from different sides of the conflict, but support them to play a constructive role in the rebuilding of society.

## **6 About the Authors and Publishers**

### **6.1 Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation**

CSVR is an independent non-governmental organisation rooted in southern Africa and based in South Africa. CSVR's mission is to develop and implement innovative and integrated human security interventions based on a commitment to social justice and fundamental rights for all. For 15 years, CSVR has initiated programmes and projects aimed at preventing violence in all its forms and building sustainable peace and reconciliation in societies emerging from violent pasts. The multi-disciplinary team includes psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, lawyers, criminologists, community development practitioners and peace, justice and human rights activists.

[www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za)

### **6.2 ProPaz**

ProPaz (Associação Instituto de Promoção de Paz) was founded in 1995 by former combatants from both Renamo and Frelimo. It started as a programme within the two major associations of ex-combatants in Mozambique: AMODEG (Mozambique Association of Demobilised Soldiers) and ADEMIMO (Mozambique Association of Disabled Veterans). ProPaz is an independent non-governmental organisation working for peace at local and national level in Mozambique, with great focus on the ex-combatants as peace promoters. ProPaz trains local peace promoters in peacebuilding and non-violent means of conflict resolution. The peace promoters work together with other members of community in violence prevention, in promoting dialogue as a mean of conflict resolution as well as in facilitating conflict resolution at the community level.

[www.propaz.org.mz](http://www.propaz.org.mz)

### **6.3 Bram Posthumus**

Bram Posthumus (Amsterdam, 1959) has been an independent journalist since 1992, covering political and economic events in various countries, mostly Francophone and Lusophone, in southern and West Africa. He also writes about music and the arts. His work appears in a variety of periodicals in the Netherlands, the UK, Belgium and South Africa.

### **6.4 Netherlands institute for Southern Africa**

The Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) was formed in 1997 as a merger of three organisations with an anti-apartheid record going back to the 1960s. NiZA is an independent non-governmental organisation, working to promote democratisation processes in southern Africa. NiZA supports civil society organisations in the various countries. In NiZA's view, a strong civil society is essential for true democratisation. Besides the Human Rights and Peace Building Programme, NiZA has two other programmes in the field of freedom of expression and economic justice.

[www.niza.nl](http://www.niza.nl)



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## **8 List of Abbreviations**

ADEMIMO	Associação dos Deficientes Militares e Paramilitares de Moçambique
AMODEG	Associação Moçambicana dos Desmobilizados de Guerra
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
CSV	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
Frelimo	Frente para a Libertação de Moçambique
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MNR	Mozambique National Resistance
MPLA	Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
ONUMOZ	Operação das Nações Unidas em Moçambique
ProPaz	Programme for the Promotion of Peace
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
REDEPAZ	Rede de Edificação de Paz em Moçambique
Renamo	Resistência Nacional de Moçambique
SADF	South African Defence Force
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
ZANU - PF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

## **9 Annexes**

### **9.1 Life Story: Cardeal (39)**

Matutuíne is a small rural community, about an hour's drive from Maputo. Like many old rural Portuguese colonial towns (this one was formerly known as Bela Vista), the centre is built around an oversized square, where the buildings of the local government can always be found – post and pre-independence. Matutuíne is situated on a major river, which is the main reason why this town is located here in the first place. Recently, electricity arrived here. This means that the one radio owned by the town's local restaurant continually blasts out South African *kwaito* and American r&b, until we ask it to be turned down a little, so we can do our interviews.

'This was a very tiny village once, without much in the way of roads, just a few paths and, of course, no electricity. During the war, there was a lot of fighting here, on account of that river you saw when you came in. That river was an obvious strategic target. People who were trying to survive here in the town needed water. So, as they tried to get to the river, they would be shot at. So we had to push the assailants back and at times that even involved fighting for individual buildings. At that time, fighting was the only contact you could possibly have with your brothers on the other side. Now that's all different of course...'

'That first contact was actually quite simple. You just went up to the other guy and said: "Good day, my friend, hello my brother, how are you?" They would respond and that was basically it...'

'I have gone around the communities, preaching peace, doing presentations, talking about violence and robbery, trying to normalise relationships. You see, the main reason for this antagonism is politics and ignorance. People don't know how you can solve conflicts, for instance by going to a local Court and that there are other conflicts that you don't need the Courts for, but can settle amongst yourselves. So the key really is to find ways to solve old conflicts, without creating new ones. When we started ProPaz and told the communities about it, most people thought it was a good idea.' ProPaz, which shares a modest office with AMODEG, would prove its worth in a very specific way in Matutuíne.

'After the army I have never worked again. Mind you, I was an all-round telecommunications specialist: telephone, telegraph, I managed them all. The problem is, that you now need a much higher level of academic knowledge, in order to function in a civilian company. That is where there is a big gap between what I know and what I can do. So - I had to manage by myself! I have a piece of land and there I grow, you know, vegetables, onions, cassava and the like. I have registered my land, it is in my name, and it gives me a decent living. It was not difficult to get the land. I was already well-known here and so all I had to do was to ask the traditional leader.'

Matutuíne today is the focus of another struggle. It's about getting worker's rights extended to those who work for the nearby tourist resort. After all, the town is close to South Africa, where the money and the tourists are. 'Just on the other side of the river is

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Ponto d'Ouro. That's a holiday resort, with a lot of big lodges – a large attraction in other words. We heard that people were sacked without pay. That is unacceptable. Yes, we know we need foreign investors but surely everyone pays the workers for work done.'<sup>20</sup>

'Little by little, we from ProPaz have begun organising the people. We made an effort to go there in person, with a delegation, to talk to some of the bosses. It would have been useless to stage a big demonstration, but something had to be done. We also used the mediation of the local chief (*regulo*), because that adds weight. So far, I am afraid to say, the situation has not improved greatly, but at least some of the people that were fired have had their salaries paid and the company has appointed some kind of a mediator who will look into ways of solving the problem. It's a modest start but I am certain that there would have been absolutely no contact at all if we had not intervened.'

### 9.2 Life Story: Paciência Manjate

Paciência Manjate (48) comes from a rural family and always had her head in books. She loved to study. But instead of following an academic path she spent 17 years in the government army; from 1977 to her demobilisation in 1994. 'Military service was obligatory, you just had to go. We went into the villages and throughout the land to defend it against the international aggressors and counterrevolutionaries. Yes, it was a very ideological time.'

'I trained first in Moamba and then in Nampula. Our military training had many aspects, logistical, political, technical and psychological. But my work with the troops was mainly political. I was the political commissar and that involved giving them political training. It also meant explaining why there was war and why we had to fight. Yes, we were involved with the children as well. We had to educate them, they were the next generation. That is why Renamo hated us so much during the war, we were training the new generation...'

'Were we specially targeted as women during the war? No, there was no special treatment, good or bad. Quite clearly everybody could die; we were in the middle of a war! And yes, women were certainly prepared to fight for the ideals. Our great example was Josina Machel, who was there when we were fighting for our Independence. She trained with Frelimo in Tanzania and she definitely showed that women could join in the struggle.'

'Then after the war we had demobilisation, we had ONUMOZ, we got multipartyism but it's the other things that take up a lot more time. You had families that were divided, brothers that had been fighting each other during the war. For instance, my sister lived through an incident. Her house was attacked and she saw one of her children die, when his throat was cut. There was blood everywhere in the living room. My sister never wanted to accept what had happened. She never wanted to talk to those who had done this terrible act. Now, very slowly, she has acknowledged that it took place. She has learnt that you can talk with people, talk with the neighbours, and even talk to those who had attacked her. And yes, I played an important role in this process.'

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<sup>20</sup> See Labour Conflicts p.26.

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‘We started AMODEG, of which I am the Secretary-General, with both groups of former combatants. We wanted to defend our interests. Yes, I know that a lot of the civilian population is afraid of us, because we used to carry arms. But it was never our idea, to scare and intimidate. Within AMODEG, we are trying to find clever solutions for the problems of former combatants and defend our interests. We don’t hold large demonstrations and such like, because we don’t feel our cause is helped by such manifestations. We’d rather work through targeted lobbying.’

‘Getting to know each other went rather well. We knew who had been on the government side and who had been on Renamo’s side but we kept our contacts very personal: where were you when you were demobilised, how is the family, those kinds of questions. And the fact that we are part of a common interest group helps as well, of course. ProPaz works like this too. It’s all about making the separation between communities and politics.’ Putting a good distance between yourself, your community and politics is a very common theme throughout Mozambique. Paciência knows why: talk of politics and talk by politicians is still closely linked to war in many peoples’ minds, so better steer clear.

She has been married to the man she met 20 years ago at the military academy in Nampula. The couple has three children; all girls. The eldest goes to University, the other two attend school.

Paciência is a lot more practical and a lot less ideological these days. Recently, the Renamo leadership wanted to embark on a national debate about the change of the current national symbols, which include an AK47 and a book, among other things. It died a quick and rightly deserved death after a few newspaper articles. Paciência has no time for these antics: ‘Look, what’s the difference? These are all jokes. Let’s talk about more practical problems and what can be done about them. We don’t need the hollowness of politics.’

### **9.3 Life Story: Armando Messitera Muharu**

Armando (37) is originally from Chibabava but now lives in the attractive port town of Quelimane, in the northern part of Mozambique. ‘School was very far away in Chibabava, up to 40 kilometres. We always jogged there and back. Luckily, I got transferred to a mission school later, so I did not have to walk all those distances any longer.’

Little did he know that an ironic twist of fate would have him walk lots more. ‘I was abducted by Renamo in April 1980 when I had been given a chance to go to my home village to say goodbye to my parents. I was to go and study administration in a church related centre. But I never got there...’

‘I was first taken to Nyanga where we were trained. Yes, that is in Zimbabwe now, but those were the very last days of the Ian Smith regime. So that did not last long and we were hurriedly evacuated and I found myself in Garagua, which is in the northern part of Manica province. From there on, we were just walking. First in Masangena, in Gaza

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Province. Then, in 1981, we walked to the next front, in Zambeze Province. We were just walking, all the time. Our commander would not hear of any rest, he was a tough man. Sometimes we went for two weeks without food... We easily covered up to a thousand kilometres, walking. It took four months to cover that distance, carrying up to 35 kilos of arms, not counting your own personal protection and supplies. Whatever the terrain and the circumstances required, we would have to carry 5 mortars shells .82 calibre, 5 mortars shells .60 calibre, 5 bazookas rockets, 2 anti tank mines, 4 claymore mines plus the arms needed for our personal defence because there was always a threat somewhere. Bombers, unfriendly fire... but we escaped, sometimes only just.'

'In 1993 I was demobilised in Zambeze Province. Well, life at the cantonment sites was good! There was enough to eat, for starters. And you did not have to worry about aeroplanes any more.'

'I decided to go to Quelimane and there, I became vice co-ordinator of AMODEG. It was practical work, not political. After all, all those who had been demobilised had the same rights. And through my work in AMODEG I was able to convince my colleagues in Renamo that the war was truly over. You could do that by getting together with the Frelimo soldiers and exchange our experiences. That worked, it helped overcome fear. People were very afraid, they were fearful of coming out of the bush. Talk, that is what you need to do. Never stop talking.'

'It is the same with ProPaz. We do *palestras* (a combination of lecture and discussion), we talk, we debate, we educate people about peace and talk about ways to solve conflicts, about the dangers of having arms hidden in the communities. We do this in the entire province. We have trained others to do the same work in the districts and we have also worked with Handicap International, an international NGO that helps landmine victims.'

'I work for ProPaz with all my heart. It has opened my horizons, especially when you see the results we are having in the communities. During the war, I was part of another type of politics. That is now all in the past. That was a kind of politics that is no longer for me. Tell you what, I will work for ProPaz until they ask me to quit...'

'Today, I have a piece of land. It was easy to get. You either rent it or buy it. So I have my *machamba*. You can say that I am reasonably satisfied. Well, not completely of course, there's quite a few things missing! My house is not yet finished, because the money is not there. My child needs to go to school, and that is not always easy. It would be good if they started using people who have had military experience...it would get us a job!'

### 9.4 Life Story: Alice Elias Zaque Cuinica

She beams at you from a distance, lively, likes to talk. Alice (42) is very good at explaining things – except when she knows that there are people better informed. She lives in the small town of Dondo, half an hour's drive from Beira, Mozambique's second port city in the centre of the country. Anyone visiting Dondo in 2005 starts with this obligatory question: "So what's up with the cobra?" It's a referral to the snake that

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has managed to install itself in a building belonging to the local authorities, from where it ambushes and attacks people. ‘Well, you’d better ask a friend of mine,’ Alice replies, and so the conversation moves quickly on to her current life. She has a husband, four school going children, but unfortunately no house yet because there is no money to finish the construction, and she makes her money from trade.

Alice has been a member of the ProPaz group in Dondo since 1996. ‘We are important in a number of ways. For instance, here in Dondo we have a big problem with crime. We are too close to the city. So people’s houses get broken into and things get stolen. What happens if the people here catch one of these guys, they beat him up terribly. We are here to tell the people that using this kind of violence is not going to solve anything. We have the police, we have a justice system – it’s not perfect but it’s there. People generally agree - but you never can tell...’

Like the other ProPaz groups, Alice and her colleagues cover large areas. In her case, that includes Maringué, notorious for its location in the dense Mozambican bush and because it was the former headquarters of the Renamo rebels. Alice thinks that two things about Maringué have improved, thanks to her work and that of her colleagues. ‘You know, Maringué is a very conservative place. The girls did not go to school. So we have managed to convince the parents that it would be a good thing to get their daughters educated as well.’ And? ‘So far it has worked,’ says Alice. The other thing is the reputation of the place. ‘People are still convinced that if you go to Maringué they will never see you again. So when I, my colleagues, and even foreigners, go there and actually come back alive it helps to change the views that people have of the place. It is a normal village, like everywhere else.’

As for her own education, Alice was lucky to have had a father who could work in South Africa and send money home and a mother who insisted on education. But it was a trap as well. ‘We all went to school in Chokwe, where I started in 1977. But shortly after that, some of us were selected for a different kind of education. Someone came into the class and literally said: “You. And you. And you. You come with me.” And we went to Xai-Xai, near Maputo, to get political training. No, of course, a lot of us did not want to go – some of us cried, it was the end of our education.’

This, then, was followed by military service. ‘It is obligatory for everyone. I was trained in Moamba, in the South. I learned everything: technical, logistics, how to use arms, ammunition, including heavy artillery. Everything! I guess I have been fortunate because I have never had to use that knowledge, we were never ambushed or anything. But I and my colleagues carried on with our political work, in Zambezia, in Nampula and then here in Dondo, explaining to people why we had to fight.’

‘I think I can still use those skills I learned during political training in Xai-Xai. Explaining, I am very good at that. And, mind you, without the military we would never have had ProPaz. It has united us, Frelimo and Renamo, like never before. But I also think that everyone, men and women, have the right to have this military training and experience. In many ways, military life is more dynamic. You walk, you work hard, and you learn to be punctual. Civilian life is more passive. I also met my husband during

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military service. You know, for women it is very difficult to have a marriage with a man who has not been in the military. Why? I think they just don't understand us...'

'This place, where we are sitting, almost became like a second home to me when I first came to Dondo. It is a kind of restaurant with some small meeting rooms in the backyard. The woman who runs it is like a mother to me. She believes that the work we are doing with ProPaz is important and we can always use her facilities for free. I hope we will continue to grow because there are enough parts in the country where we still have political tensions, like Moçimba da Praia in the North and other places. It can be done, we are having results. Look at Maringué, in the bad old days you could not even enter that place. And now, we are like brothers and sisters there.'

### 9.5 Unused Landmine Expertise

During the war a lot of former combatants were involved in the planting and, as time and fronts moved on, the removal of landmines. Curiously enough, this expertise is largely ignored in a country that could benefit immensely from the knowledge that remains in peoples' minds, about where they placed mines and where they, therefore, are likely to be found. This knowledge may also be useful in another way, for locating arms caches, as these are frequently protected by mines. Someone knows either who put them there, or knows where mines were placed in the ground.

The issue does give rise to legal problems. The police may think that former combatants, who submit information about arms caches, have had a hand in putting them there. This does not bode well for good collaboration in mutual trust. The same applies to the landmines issue. Mozambique was an early signatory to the international Ottawa Convention that banned the production, transfer, use and sale of landmines worldwide. According to the Landmine Monitor 2004, legislation relevant to the Ottawa Convention was being prepared in Parliament but any law that may come into force as a result will post-date the end of both the war for national Independence and the 16 years war. As the last war ended about five years before the Convention was created, this should not really be a problem internally, but again, the issue of trust comes in. There should be ways of passing on this kind of sensitive information to the police but will still ensure the safety of that information, and, if need be, the identity of the person who provided it. ProPaz is trying to set up a system that would make this possible.

In the experience of one former combatant, the police also fail to act if information is actually provided. 'Even if people come forward, in spite of the fact that they feel intimidated by the police, nothing is done. This is something we don't understand. But the police prefer to work on their own. This is strange. There are people who know where mines are because they put them there. Why are they not asked?' The sentiment is echoed by one of his former colleagues, now also with ProPaz. 'In actual fact, I was a *sapador* (mine expert).' He added, really sadly, 'but I never get asked...'

One former combatant voiced the suspicion that their knowledge would somehow not be wanted because removing landmines is an industry. This industry involves the government, the army, local and international NGOs and companies. 'People who know



are not asked and people who don't know get the jobs...' In fairness, it must be said that Norwegian People's Aid, HALO Trust and other de-mining NGOs that have worked in Mozambique have hired former combatants with mine experience as *sapadores*. The Dutch contingent to ONUMOZ set up a demining school in Beira, which was explicitly recruiting former combatants in 1993. The truth of the matter is that donor interest in demining in Mozambique is gradually drying up and that the government is expected to take things over in the not-too-distant future. Most of the major international demining groups are preparing to pull out of Mozambique, as other countries (Angola among them) move up on the demining agenda.

## **9.6 City Bias, Rural Knowledge**

'We are now entering a zone of hunger,' Paulo Andrasson Vinte declares. Ever since the bush started thinning, slowly but surely, it appeared that something had gone seriously wrong with the rains this year. Parched dry fields, withering maize stems, the telltale signs of a harvest gone bone dry. The drought also affects the place that has possibly the worst reputation in all of Mozambique: the central town of Maringué. It was Renamo's wartime capital for a number of years and the scariest stories are told, the least of which is that once you have decided to go there you are somehow not expect to turn up alive again. In fact, getting there could not be easier. The road from Gorongosa, which is the closest town to Maringué (200 kilometres away), is the best in the country and there is only half an hour of earth road that separates Maringué from the tar. The town that used to house Afonso Dhlakama sports a large collection of new buildings (the biggest one belonging to the *administrador*) and the whole place has an airy pleasantness to it, improved further by the fact that the guests are made to feel genuinely at home. In spite of the serious food shortage (the government has declared it an emergency area and appealed for international assistance), chicken, *xima* (maize porridge) and some vegetables were rustled up to provide the visitors with at least a half decent meal. Custom, not ingratiation, is behind this.

The problem, as Salomão Mungoi, ProPaz programme officer, explains on the way back, is that places like Maringué and others are written about by people who never bother to go there. Certainly, there have been problems in Maringué, not least thanks to the actions of Dhlakama's so-called Presidential Guards, a group of private fighters ostensibly set up to protect the Renamo leader. They have caused some incidents here and elsewhere. But painting the town like a viper's nest certainly does not do it justice – nor does it help national reconciliation.