



Global Views

Conflict

Opinion: 4 lessons from Mozambique's successful peace process

Mozambique has shown itself to be a global leader for peace, at a time when peace is needed more than ever in the world.

By **Neha Sanghrajka**, **Mirko Manzoni** // 24 January 2024



The President of the Republic of Mozambique Filipe Nyusi and the leader of RENAMO, Ossufo Momade, embrace following the signing of the Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation in Maputo on Aug. 6, 2019. Photo by: Peace Process Secretariat

The Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation was signed in 2019 with a now famous embrace between the president of Mozambique, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, and the leader of the opposition party, the Mozambican National Resistance, or Renamo, Ossufo Momade. In 2012, when [low levels of violence](#) broke out and a 1992 [United Nations](#)-brokered peace agreement faltered, such a gesture between the government and

opposition seemed impossible.

From a mediation process to the successful implementation of a peace deal, this was only possible by addressing root causes, implementing while negotiating, an agile structure, and embedding gender equity.

The disarmament and demobilization of over [5,000 Renamo combatants](#), a process that was finalized in June 2023, seemed even further out of reach. Now, these women and men are reintegrating into communities of their choice across Mozambique.

While every conflict requires tailor-made solutions, our experience as part of a small team of mediators who worked toward this agreement and its implementation identified many learnings that helped overcome challenges and pave the road to success.

Here are four lessons relevant for other processes that we learned along the way.

Focus on the root causes of conflict

One of the first actions we took when mediating the 2019 Maputo Accord was looking back with the parties at why the 1992 agreement did not last. One key issue emerged as critical: the need for sustainable reintegration options for former Renamo combatants.

The issue of pensions for former combatants was recurrent throughout our mediation work, and it became clear that unlocking the issue would significantly contribute to sustainability of the peace agreement.

While it was not an easy topic to negotiate, the buy-in of the negotiating parties was eventually secured. This led to a [historic decree in 2023](#) to extend pension rights to eligible former combatants. This involved not only negotiations with the parties, but also development groups and international financial institutions [linking the discussions to wider work on pensions](#) in the country to ensure that pension modalities tabled were cognizant of the realities of the system in Mozambique.

Securing pension rights helped give former combatants a sense of dignity, guaranteeing we not only addressed a root cause of

conflict but also kept a human-centered approach. Focusing not just on quick wins has ensured a sustainable and resilient peace for years to come.

Following their disarmament and demobilization, [5,221 former combatants](#) are now registering for pensions that will support their full engagement in civilian life.

Implementing while negotiating

Peace processes are not linear and require constant commitment to dialogue. Negotiations do not begin and end with the signing of a single agreement, and often key moments happen outside of any offices or headquarters.

Some of the strategies that unknotted the process in Mozambique were simple. Confidence-building measures between the parties started with very simple things such as facilitating direct conversation between the leaders without intermediaries, in which they could build rapport and trust each other's commitment. This slowly evolved into more robust actions, for example, meeting face-to-face. And days spent going back and forth conducting shuttle diplomacy between the capital and RENAMO's military base in central Mozambique. And even creating a neutral space for talks to take place.

Implementing while negotiating was pivotal to the process. Before any peace agreement was signed, in December 2016, a [cease-fire](#) was announced that was subsequently made indefinite. Additionally, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, or DDR, process for Renamo combatants began before the peace agreement was signed, signaling a strong commitment to the process from the parties. These actions built trust in the process while negotiations were still ongoing.

This pragmatic and dual track of negotiating while implementing continued even after the peace agreement was signed and hurdles appeared. In 2019, the negotiating parties had to address the [emergence of a breakaway military junta](#). Following intense mediation efforts, the self-proclaimed Renamo military junta eventually announced a cease-fire and participated in the DDR process. Sustained dialogue between the parties was essential throughout the process.

Potential of an agile structure

One of the successes of this process was that national ownership was prioritized at every level. For international groups, our work had to support this principle through an agile structure that had the flexibility to adapt to an ever-evolving context.

The president of Mozambique and Renamo leaders took on key and exposed roles in the process, meaning decisions could be negotiated and agreed upon rapidly, and creating a top-down approach that generated national trust in the process.

For us, as international mediators, our roles shifted at different moments, ranging from behind-the-scenes facilitation, mediating on key issues, or leadership of an international contact group.

The [COVID-19](#) pandemic is a good example of how an agile structure allowed mediators and the president of Mozambique and Renamo leaders to maintain a close dialogue focused on pragmatic problem-solving, allowing them to overcome challenges and resolve disputes through peaceful means.

In less than a month, a new structure for the DDR process was agreed upon and implemented during the initial phase of the pandemic. The Office of the Personal Envoy and the [Peace Process Secretariat, or PPS](#), with the support of the [U.N. Office for Project Services](#), offered a lean, focused, and discreet platform to support implementation.

Embedding gender equity in the process

From the archives:

[Women, peace, security agenda approaches 20th year with shaky progress](#)

Progress on the landmark U.N. Resolution 1325 is not “coming fast enough or far enough,” U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said. The new resolution aims to close the gap in implementing the agenda.

Importantly, the process championed efforts to advance the U.N. [women, peace, and security agenda](#) through a gender-responsive approach to the design, implementation, and management of all DDR activities.

This was enshrined in Mozambique's [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security \(2018-2022\)](#). The setup of the

PPS, also embedded core values of equity, with women making up nearly 50% of PPS staff and 75% of senior staff positions held by women. When looking back at each of these lessons, dialogue was at the core, enabling all of this work, from concept to structure and implementation.

Whether working directly on a peace process, or in a conflict-affected context, these are learnings that can be applied today around the world. Mozambique's very recent experience with peace building provides hopes for the future.

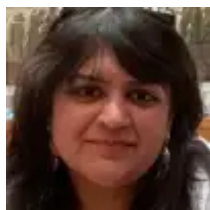
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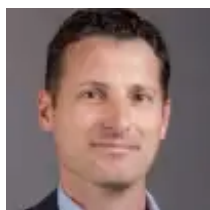
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