

Status of the Village Development Organizations

- A sample study in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

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1. Contexts

The Republic of Mozambique is a South East African country, surrounded by the countries of Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa. The population of country is approximately 22 million, out of which 43% are under the age 15 (National Statistics Institute, INE-2010). Mozambique emerged from civil war (1977-1992) as one of the most impoverished and capacity constrained countries in the world. Since then it grew impressively with an annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of over 7% after 2005. However, Mozambique remains one of the world's poorest countries, with about 75% of the total population living under the poverty line with income less than US\$ 1.25 per day (UNDP, 2009).¹

The economic vulnerability of the country was reflected when the GDP growth rate declined to 4.3% in 2016 due to fiscal tightening, a slowdown in Foreign Direct Investment and a hidden debt crisis. GDP growth is expected to pick up to 5.5%, driven by exports from the extractive sector (African Development Bank Group, 2017).² Though the incidence of poverty has declined, most of the 70% of Mozambicans who constitute the rural population of the country are development deprived and vulnerable – with extremely poor indicators in health status, educational attainment and food security. Moreover, the decline in GDP growth has negatively impacted the development support provided by the central government in Maputo to district and other local authorities.

Poverty in Mozambique is more rural than urban - 71.2% compared to 62% (UNCDF/UNDP, 2005).³ Thus the development of rural areas in Mozambique is essential and requires decisive thrusts to promote and develop participatory local development processes that can be effective in organizing financial and in-kind resources for local development even in the absence of strong central and local state funding. This includes the strengthening of village governance institutions, as well as collective actions by citizens and government to improve

¹ <http://www.mz.undp.org/content/mozambique/en/home/countryinfo.html>

² African Development Bank Group, 2017: Mozambique Economic Outlook (www.afdb.org)

³ UNCD/UNDP, 2005: Consolidated review of case studies, regional experiences, best practices and evidence based on UNCDF & UNDP Support in Mozambique, prepared by Israel Jacob Massunganhe, UNDP-Mozambique

public services, agricultural production to find solutions to ongoing problems of food availability, as well as identifying approaches to constructively engage the large number of youth and women in the local development process.

The Government of Mozambique is well aware of the importance of people's participation to speed up development processes. The Constitution of Mozambique defines two types of local authorities: municipalities in the cities and town and village councils in the rural areas. The Mozambican decentralization process has created local councils and forums at district, administrative post and locality levels. But these mechanisms are more political in how they are structured and operate, being constituted on the basis of political considerations and so generally less effective in anchoring participatory development processes. These structures are often seen as an extension of the ruling party and its preferences and somewhat lack legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Cabo Delgado is the northernmost province of Mozambique, bordering Tanzania and the provinces Nampula and Niassa. Pemba is the capital of the province. The region is composed of three main ethno-linguistic communities: Makonde, Macua and Mwani. The province is rich in natural resources, including natural gas, but lacks development, having some of the worst health and education indicators in Mozambique. Like most parts of rural Mozambique, people in Cabo Delgado do look for opportunities and support to participate in development processes and achieve desired development outcomes, but often find these opportunities lacking or – for youth and women – relatively closed.

The basic public services such as water, education, health need intense interventions for outcomes to be improved. However, a close observation finds that government led development initiatives across the villages are not so visible in improving the quality of public services and their accessibility to the people. The communities, in turn, are desperate to do something to improve their life conditions but they do lack structures and large-scale support to do so. The Civil Society Organizations, including both (under-resourced) local NGOs and larger international NGOs, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, are the only visible development actors – often taking on the role of the state in the provision of many services.

Under this politico-development context, any opportunity either through external support or through collective efforts of people themselves flickers new hopes among communities

across the villages. The Village Development Organizations (VDOs), a model established and promoted globally by AKF, but with variations also seen among other international NGOs present in northern Mozambique, seems to have given some hope to people as a grassroots mechanism for promoting local development. The VDOs provide opportunities for people to come together, think together, act together for whatever little could be done for the common public good.

2. The Evaluation Approach

This study was commissioned by the MASC with support from the AKF-Mozambique with the following background and Terms of reference:

“AKF has been active in Mozambique since 2001 with the establishment of the Coastal Rural Support Programme (CRSP). CRSP employs a multi-input area development approach (MIAD) with interventions in economic development, civil society and local governance, education, health and habitat. The ultimate aim of CRSP(M) is to contribute to an improved quality of life for vulnerable households in select districts of Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique.

As part of its Civil Society and Local Governance component, AKF has been supporting the creation and strengthening of Village Development Organizations (VDOs) in Cabo Delgado since 2008. AKF endeavors to establish VDO as Inclusive, participatory, transparent, accountable, front line institutions, playing an enabling development and governance role at the village level. VDOs are elected community-level bodies tasked with the responsibility of: a) defining – in a participatory manner – the aspirations of their communities in terms of development priorities (health, education, infrastructure, etc.); b) developing clear proposals articulating these priorities to district government and relevant private sector actors in order to leverage funding and services; c) leading community-wide information campaigns (e.g. on topics such as HIV/AIDS, good nutritional practices, school enrolment, gender based violence, etc.), as well as d) leading/contributing to multi-stakeholder conferences that allow for district-wide discussions on pertinent development topics and coordination action to be planned.

As elected bodies, VDOs are also intended to play a role in representing the value of democratic processes at the local level, with periodic social audits providing an opportunity for members of the community to question VDOs on their performance, thus putting in place mechanisms for accountability and transparency that are intended to underpin community expectations around governance more broadly. AKF’s work with VDOs was accelerated under the six-year Increasing Food Security and Incomes in Northern Mozambique (FSI) project (2010-2016), supported by Global Affairs Canada, as well as by smaller complementary projects supported by the Mechanism for Civil Society Support (MASC).

AKF has undertaken institutional maturity assessments looking at the internal organization and activities of the VDOs, as well as community perceptions of their performance. However, to date there has not been an external and independent comprehensive review of VDOs' contributions to development at the community level nor the extent to which they have been truly successful in mobilizing community members in support of development objectives. There is also a lack of information about the nature of the relationship between VDOs and potential district (and sub-district) government and private sector partners, including the perceptions of these partners on the utility of the VDOs as local-level interlocutors. Finally, AKF lacks clear independently gathered evidence about the role that VDOs are playing (if any) in shaping the perceptions of community members around issues of accountability and transparency in local governance. Given that AKF is at a transition period in its programming, weighing the extent to which VDOs (of which there are approximately 180 at present) can serve as key partners in future projects, it is deemed worthwhile to take steps at present to capture this information.

Key preliminary topics/questions to be covered by this evaluation include:

- To what extent are VDOs playing an effective role in addressing local development issues? Have VDOs played a role in improving local level development outcomes?
- To what extent have VDOs been able to mobilize communities for local level development actions? If successful/not successful, why?
- To what extent have VDOs been effective in establishing linkages with local government and (where relevant) private sector actors in order to facilitate development? In what thematic areas are VDOs developing the most fruitful linkages with local government and the private sector? Why?
- What are the perspectives of local government actors and private sector representatives towards VDOs? Where local government/private sector have responded positively to establishing linkages with VDOs, what have been the motivating factors behind this receptiveness?
- How effective have the governance processes introduced around VDOs (e.g. social audits) been in allowing VDOs to be seen as credible village bodies and have these processes played a role in shaping people's broader perceptions around accountability and transparency in governance?

- What are the main gaps that prevent VDOs from being more successful in fulfilling their missions? What steps can/should AKF and other partners take to strengthen VDOs in order to make them more effective?
- What are the prospects for the long-term sustainability of the VDOs? Are they worth sustaining? If so, what more needs to be done to ensure their ongoing presence as effective local development actors?”

The Evaluation Team comprised Manoj Rai, Director, PRIA, India and Thomas Selemene, an Independent Consultant from Maputo, Mozambique. The team was ably supported by Edith de Encarnação, Assistant for Monitoring and Evaluation with AKF-Mozambique’s office in Pemba. The process of evaluation began with:

- I. *Evolving an Understanding on the VDOs:* An analysis of study reports, articles, proposals prepared by AKF on the formation, functioning and outcomes of VDOs in different areas of programme intervention. These documents were provided in advance by emails from Graham Sherbut, AKF-Mozambique’s Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Research.
- II. *Selection of sample VDOs:* In consultation with AKF and MASC, it was agreed to intensively study 8 VDOs through the use of qualitative research methods. AKF provided list of 57 VDOs from 4 districts of Cabo Delgado. Every VDO in the list was classified as weak or strong, on the basis of a performance criteria set up by the AKF. From this list a sample of 8 VDOs were selected using stratified random sampling. Accordingly 2 VDOs (one weak and one strong) were selected from each of the 4 districts. The sample comprised:
 - Quissanga: Mahate (strong) and Nraha (weak)
 - Meluco: Imbada (strong) and 1 de Maio (weak)
 - Macomia: Xinavane (strong) and Simbolongo (weak)
 - Metuge: Namuapala (strong) and Pulo (weak)

It would have been ideal to also include VDOs from the district of Mocimboa da Praia, where AKF is implementing its current MASC-supported VDO programme. However, political unrest in the district, which has been ongoing since September 2017,

necessitated the exclusion of fieldwork in Mocimboa da Praia for this evaluation. AKF will use other means, including project-specific case studies, to address some of this evaluation's research questions with the Mocimboa da Praia VDOs in early 2018.

III. *Field Visit:* In consultation with MASC, AKF and local consultant Thomas Selemene, the field visit was planned for 21st-28th November 2017. The evaluation team started its field interactions with an initial meeting with the AKF team comprising Joaquim Chale (Interim Civil Society Programme Manager), Edith de Encarnação, Angela Collet (External Consultant and Former AKF Gender Advisor) and Elsa Semo (Current AKF Gender Advisor). The AKF team provided an useful overview of the VDO programme, AKF's perspective on VDOs, expectations and outputs, successes and challenges. After the discussion with the AKF core team present in Pemba and associated with VDO programme, the evaluation team had an initial conversation with Alfredo Chamusso, AKF-Mozambique's Country Director. The actual field visits started with Nraha VDO. In next couple of days, the team interviewed members of all 8 sample VDOs. Despite the language barrier (however, Portuguese to English translation was supported by a local translator arranged by AKF), our interaction with VDO members were quite intense and enriching.

The team also visited government officials and interviewed them to understand their perceptions, information about VDOs and their views on existing or possible governmental supports to the VDOs. The officials interviewed included: the District Administrator of Metuge, the district administrator of Quissanga, two representatives of the Mahate Administrative Post; the Permanent Secretary of Meluco, Head of the Station of Muaguide, the Heads of Administrative Posts of Mucojo and of Macomia-Sede, and the Permanent Secretary of Macomia.

IV. *Debriefing cum Validation Meetings:* After the field visit, a debriefing meeting took place with Alfredo Chamusso. Further focussed conversations (on merging issues from field) took place with AKF core staff: Monitoring and Evaluation assistant, Edith Encarnação; with the Manager of the Component of the Civil Society, Joaquim Chale; and with the district supervisor of Mocimboa da Praia, Anabela Arcádio. To

understand local Civil Society views on VDO, structured interview with Ferraz Sufo, the Chairman FOCADE (Forum of Civil Society Organizations of Cabo-Delgado) was very helpful.

V. After my return to India, all data generated from preliminary analysis of AKF documents, field data and other related data from websites and reports were collated and analysed to prepare a report comprising following sections:

- (i) Context,
- (ii) Evaluation Approaches
- (iii) Status of the VDOs: Answers to Pointed questions
- (iv) Potential of VDOs- Critical Analysis
- (v) Ways Forward

3. Status of Village Development Organizations (VDOs)

As per field interactions with a number of randomly selected VDOs in Cabo Delgado, it seems that the conceptualization of VDOs and particularly their introduction to the Cabo Delgado context, started almost a decade ago. At this time, AKF was drawing upon work done with village development bodies in other countries – particularly Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan – where the organization had a strong track record of effectively implementing local governance and civil society programmes. Pilot efforts were made to facilitate the formation of early groups of selected villagers to steer village development process at their levels – with the expectation that this approach could, as in Asia, become a replicable model that could serve as a basis for AKF's Civil Society programming in Mozambique. For example, VDO members of Pulo village in Metuge district informed us that their VDO was formed in 2006. Since then all the members of Pulo VDO regularly meet and work together. Their last meeting took place in October 2017 to discuss and generate community contributions (1500 plus Meticaïs) for the repair of a village well to get drinking water. It may be noted here that direct AKF support to this VDO ended in 2014.

The team also met VDOs who were constituted in 2007 (Namuapala), 2008 (Mahate), 2009 (Nraha), 2011 (Simbolongo), 2013 (Imbada, Primeiro de Maio) and 2014 (Xinavane). Over a period of time and depending upon their own contexts, most of the VDOs have matured in their own ways. There used to be time when some VDOs did receive supports from the government (as the secondary data provided by the AKF suggests). However, none of the sample VDOs are currently receiving any support from any external source, including the government. Currently, VDOs mobilize contributions from their own communities. Even with so few resources at their disposal, the works of VDOs varies from women's empowerment, conflict management, health care and school education to the development and management of water sources, sanitation, the repair of roads, agriculture land improvement, production of bread, fencing of football grounds and community cultivations etc.

What amazed us during interactions with all 8 VDOs was their sense of pride in being VDO members. In most of the meetings, members of VDOs (not only the President) spoke fondly about their VDOs. Depending on leadership and resources of the villages, some of the VDOs are very vibrant while others are not so active. There is also a case where a VDO has a 'name

crisis'. The VDO of Simbolongo village, as a group of elected members, regularly meets and acts. It does everything which a VDO should be doing, as was taught by the AKF. However, this village group does not call itself a VDO. They call themselves a 'Community Group'. This is because of confusion with the term VDO. The villagers thought that a 'VDO' was a project of AKF and so, the use of term VDO was appropriate as long as AKF was providing active support. After AKF stopped this support (which was part of specific grant funding), the group did not stop working but hesitated to call themselves a VDO. While this VDO changed its name, its essential character of a VDO continues till today. After our meeting and clarifications, the group was very happy to know that it could call itself a VDO.

The interviewed members of different VDOs had complaints against government for not doing significant development work in their villages. They also had complaints against AKF for not being with them continuously and not supporting them with the required training and guidance (which AKF did very well in past⁴). But the evaluation team did not hear any comment from anyone in the field which connoted that functions of VDOs were not useful. All VDO members (we met 79 VDO members from 8 selected VDOs), who spoke, said that they would enthusiastically sustain their work, as the formation of VDOs had a number of positive and broad impacts: by collectivizing members of the community and establishing a clear focus on community priorities, the VDO had given members an identity and platform to participate, plan and act together. Individually they were more vulnerable, collectively they were stronger. VDOs provide a mechanism to pool community resources, so the community has more resources for providing/improving public goods. Moreover, as per our conversation with government officials suggest, government listens to them even though government's responses have been meagre and many times insignificant. The VDOs were happy that their proposals were at least attended by the government. The government officials, in our conversation, felt that those proposals gave them new information and new perspectives. As per many district officials, they don't have any functional systematic mechanism to

⁴ In his email comment, Mr. Sujeet Sarkar of the AKF, explained the reasons behind the discontinuity of the supports to the VDOs. In his words, "..., these gaps occurred due to prolong funding scarcity faced by AKF. Beside these.... funding stopped at one go completely derailing an otherwise vibrant capacity building programme. Hence the highlighted gaps are not a deficit in terms of thinking or even in the design of the programme, as such."

understand the actual development needs of different people in different villages. The local councils are there but district authorities don't get systematic and complete information about development issues in the villages. Under these circumstances, detailed development proposals from some of the VDOs were a welcome change, if one was interested knowing in about status and needs of the village for which the VDO submitted the proposal. Government was always constrained of resources so, it could provide very little supports to very few VDOs across the district. Currently, district councils don't have any development budget. So, district authorities don't provide any support to any VDO. But in future when budget situations would improve, as government official felt, the proposals from the VDOs would be helpful in utilizing limited government resources more efficiently for maximum development.

VDOs also feel that because of their collective nature and high level of community support, different NGOs (AKF's own different programmes, other NGOs such as Umokaz et al) now choose to approach them for community mobilization. Also because of collective profile of the VDOs, small traders happily provide them materials on collective/social credits, which VDOs command due to visible community supports. These factors suggest that VDOs are playing, on a modest level, an important community leadership role. Despite existing resource and capacity challenges, the VDOs sounded quite optimistic about their future roles. However, anxieties to do something bigger and sooner were discernible.

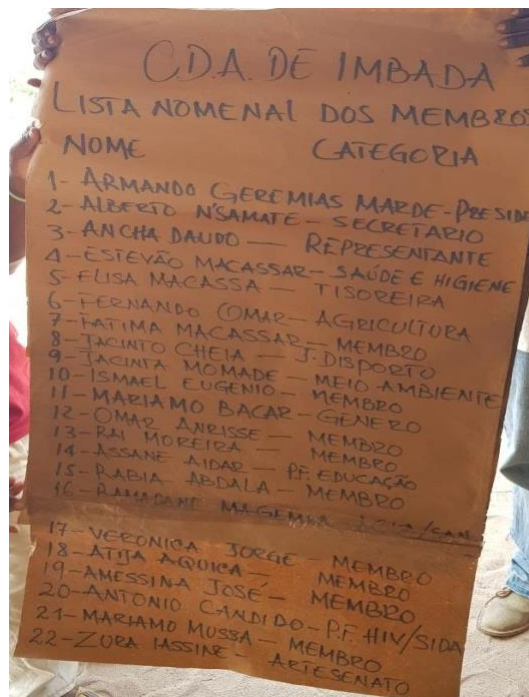
3.1.The Organizational Set-up of the VDOs:

The VDOs are perhaps the only functional community structures which are formed by the communities for collective and participatory development of their villages. Unlike Local Consultative Councils, the VDOs are seen and experienced to be community-centric and community led. AKF initially facilitated the process of election of members of VDOs. However, AKF neither influenced nor interfered with community decision making processes in the election of the VDO members. Almost all VDO members were aware of the importance of election (over selection). But somehow opportunity for election did not



come in any of the VDOs we interviewed. This may also be due to the fact that VDOs are operating in very limited zones as a very closed community group. Initially the VDOs were evolving when AKF was working with them. But as supports from the AKF discontinued, the evolution process of VDOs did stopped there. They remained as closed community groups. Once VDOs become more vibrant and more exposed to external actors, higher roles with higher resources, as experiences from other countries and other community groups suggest⁵, the membership of VDOs will become more sought after. Then elections may take place. In all of 8 VDOs, the membership was finalised with the community consensus (actually majority choices in practice).

In general, a VDO has 15-25 members, including the President and Secretary of the VDO. Every member is assigned responsibility for a particular sector of development. Accordingly



the member is called focal point for that sector (health, education, sports, gender, water and sanitation etc). A focal person acts as champion of the theme/sector but s/he is not a decision-maker. All development decisions are made democratically in monthly VDO meetings (earlier it used to be fortnightly).

There are almost equal number of women members in all sample VDOs. But intensity (and visibility) of participation of women members in VDO activities seems to be a bit weaker. In our meetings with the VDOs, we found fewer women

members physically present. Those women who were present during our interactions were comparatively less vocal than their male counterparts. We found only one VDO out of 8 sample VDOs where a woman (secretary of the VDO) was reflecting command of authority

⁵ When Panchayat elections took place for the first time in India (1995-2000), many of the positions for ordinary membership for the three tiers of Panchayats (at village, sub-district and district levels) were uncontested (sometimes empty and quite often election through consensus). As Panchayats evolved to become very vibrant and resourceful institutions over a period of a decade or so, all those positions (which used to be filled in through community consensus) are intensively contested and elected positions. With increase powers and resources, intensity of electioneering also increases.

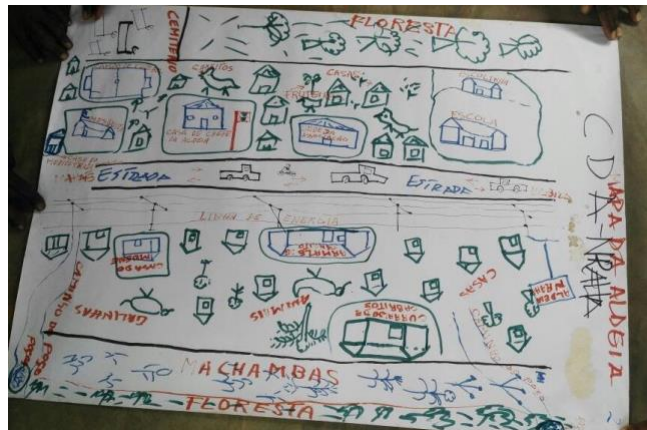
with seemingly efficient managerial style. She was also most vocal in her group and very systematically presented to us how she had been managing minimum resources of her VDO for maximum community benefits. On the basis of sample observations and also on the basis of 'off the record' conversations, it seems that women participation in decision making processes of the VDOs are limited. It needs to be further emphasized and intensively supported in future.

The candidature for memberships in most of the VDOs seems to be voluntary. The AKF documents suggests for election of the VDO members. As discussed above, in all sample VDOs, that all members were selected through consensus. The VDOs seems more or less apolitical, autonomous and independent. There are new trends, where some of the VDO presidents (e.g. Nraha VDO) have become president of Local Consultative Council or vice versa (Mahate VDO). This trend could be a reflection of the rising profile of VDOs. If that is the case, then future interventions to support the VDOs should carefully take into account the issues of contestations and elite captures of VDOs. In general the VDOs are credible development organizations in eyes of communities as well as the government. They are deeply connected to the issues and the development of their communities and so, in turn, receive full supports from their communities.

3.2 Community Mobilization by the VDOs

VDOs are the only functional apolitical platform for people's participation and the community processes at village levels. The VDOs are product of initial community mobilization (by AKF) when 15-25 members of the community came forward to take leadership roles as members of the VDOs. The community elects/selects the VDO members on the basis of predetermined qualifications for election (residence, age, behaviour, capacity and integrity etc.). The VDO members in turn are accountable to their community, not to any external agency.

Since the VDOs receive comparatively nominal external financial resources (except initial technical guidance and supports from AKF), the relevance and existence of VDOs depend on community mobilization and community support for local development works. The VDOs often mobilize the community



- (i) For Resource Mapping to identify what resources are available in their village and what resources are lacking
- (ii) For Participatory Planning to decide upon the type of works that need to be done for improving services in the village
- (iii) For Social issues such school enrolment or conflict management
- (iv) For Cash and In-Kind contributions in implementation of identified community development plans
- (v) Sometimes, on the request of external agencies such as an NGO who may be interested in doing some work in the village

As reported by the most of VDOs, one of their initial community mobilizations happened for resource mapping. Through this process, VDOs along with community members evolved common understanding of resources and facilities which were available in the villages. It also helped the community to realize which important resources are not available, and which should be acquired. Community discussions take place around appropriate use of existing resources such as water resources, schools, health facilities etc. VDOs along with their communities undertake participatory planning to maintain existing resources and create the new resources needed.

No doubt, the VDOs have public legitimacy and so, exercise great influence over their communities. Varying degrees of community mobilization take place in almost all actions of the VDOs. In current contexts, it could be said that community mobilization is both a strength and compulsion (to generate resources) of all the VDOs.

Many of the VDOs do realize that community mobilization also raises community expectations. Rising expectations and constraining resources are big challenge for every VDO. Above that, VDOs also lack technical and managerial capacities. Almost all of the sample VDOs did plan for varieties of things such as primary school, drinking water, primary health centres, community centres, village market, etc. These ambitious plans were based on felt needs of the communities. So, VDOs did ambitious planning, mostly under community pressure but also sometimes with unexplained optimism about access to external resources. But actual implementation remained limited to voluntary cleaning of public places, maintenance of water sources and repair of village roads through voluntary labour contributions. VDOs, as they expressed during interviews with us, felt disappointed on not being able to do more for their communities. If there are no external supports, how long VDOs could keep mobilizing communities to do planning without implementation of the planned projects?

3.3. Role of VDOs in Local Development

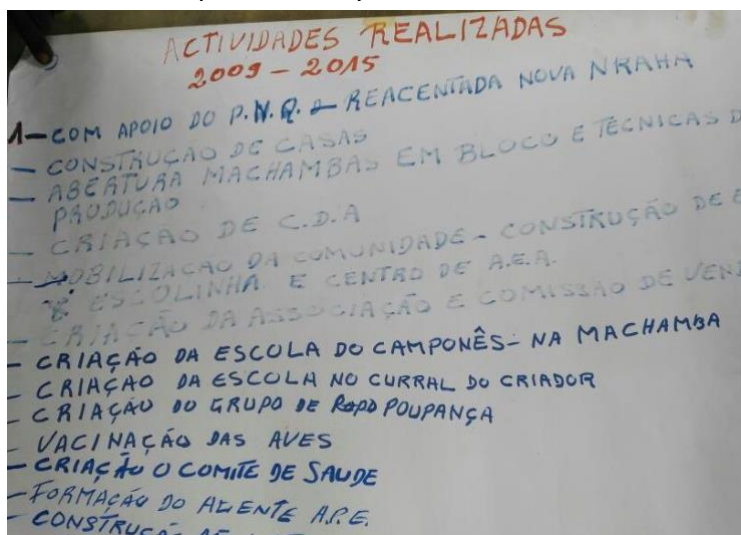
VDOs have played admirable roles to promote local development, despite their limited capacities and challenging external environment. In absence of external supports, most of the VDOs have limited their actions to work with their communities and undertake mostly social initiatives (such as women's empowerment, school enrolment, personal hygiene and sanitation et al) and some small infrastructure initiatives (such as improving local water sources, school building, cleaning, construction of approach road, et al) using community contributions. It may be noted here, due to such small initiatives, the VDO villages are perceived (by people and government officials) to be better developed than neighboring non-VDO villages.

When external supports were available from the government and AKF, VDOs carried out a wider variety of works for their villages. These works included: plantations, area based aggregated agriculture development, facilitating village electrification, providing all possible social supports to saving groups or encouraging creation of new saving groups, market linkages, banana business, taxing timber cutters, sought financial supports for school building from an exploration company, et.al.

One of the very important works being done very silently by most of the VDOs happens be (what some women members of Simbolongo first pointed in Portuguese as) "Life Style Change

and Anger Management”. Later on many VDOs and government officials, when asked specifically, reiterated the same. The “Life Style Change and Anger Management” actually means conflict management. Most of the villages have very large youth population. Due to absence of basic services for life, perceived apathy from external support providers (government particularly) and a prevailing high unemployment rate, these youths are prone to feel simmering discontent during their idle times. The VDOs have been constructively engaging these youths in community development. Being part of a visible development process keeps these youths away from negative thoughts and destructive activities. The religion focal person in the Simbolongo VDO, for example, works very hard to ensure that people follow religious practices for peace and harmony. The VDOs in general are striving to evolve a positive social order in their villages to mitigate social conflicts. These silent social contributions of the VDOs become quite important when one looks around to see rising unrest among youths of neighbouring districts.

Most of the VDOs were found to be development oriented and development focused. But none of them has fully realized their development potential due the external constraints. The limitations experienced by VDOs could be attributed to three causes: (i) shortfalls in VDOs’



own technical capacities (ii) VDOs’ limited influence over their community’s own limited resources (iii) Lack of (AKF type) supports to influence top-down development structures of the government.

The AKF facilitated formation of VDOs provided the groups with

periodic trainings. While this support was very useful, it was for a relatively short period (3-4 years), due to the fact that AKF’s support was based on time-limited grant funding. The VDOs need longer and more intense support⁶ to achieve results in their development efforts. Most

⁶ In his remarks Mr Graham Sherbut of AKF shared that “even in countries like Pakistan and Tajikistan, where capacity at the community level is much higher, VDOs (or the local equivalents) still require considerable ongoing support, 10 and even 20 years after first being created.”

of the VDO members are neither well educated not technically trained. So, they do require regular handholding support (means more intense supports) over a period of at least 3-5 years to develop sufficient expertise on the skills of planning, project formulations, negotiations and partnerships.

Some of the VDOs did formulate the project and sent it to local advisory council, which in turn submitted it to District Council through their hierarchical administrative channel. Earlier, AKF used to provide all possible support to the VDOs in terms of proposal submission, VDO-district



council interface. AKF also used to catalyse support for VDO proposals through mutli-stakeholders' dialogue comprising VDOs, NGOs, Government and Private Sector. In absence of the AKF support, VDOs could not pursue

their proposals directly with the district council. They have to approach the district council via local council. Absence of a formal structure for follow-up coupled with limited technical capacities of VDOs impeded the progress on garnering external support for local development. Some lucky VDOs, as AKF staff informed, received support. Only 3 VDOs, (which we interviewed) elaborated about receiving some supports from the government but that has stopped now. For the last two years, as admitted by the district governors, districts themselves have had no budget to provide any support to VDO-projects.

Nevertheless, as shared by many VDOs and reconfirmed by officials at Post Administration and District levels, the development processes and development outcomes are more visible in the villages where VDOs do exist and work. VDOs have cleaned up the wells in their villages, maintain water fountains, maintain village roads, take care of enrolment of their children in the schools, manage conflicts, keep the village 'united', keep the village clean and environment green, promote gender equality et al. One of the published documents from AKF mentioned that VDOs repaired 350 km of village roads, enrolled 2900 children and got 5000 children immunized during 2015-16. One district governor told that among all villages in the district, he would prefer to visit VDO-villages as they keep their village roads well maintained. The VDO- villages are cleaner so, preferable for visits.

3.4 Linkages of VDOs with Local Government and Private Sector

AKF reported that during 2015-16, VDOs submitted 126 funding proposals to the government. As per AKF documents, these proposals included varieties of themes such as improving and managing water sources, school infrastructure, road repairs, machinery for maize milling, improving health facilities etc. As per AKF, a total of 35 proposals were approved and funded (16 by the Government, 5 by INGOs and 14 by private sector). The local government officials substantiated this when they told that VDO- proposals were submitted and some of those proposals were supported by funding from the government. But this happened before 2015, not now.

During our conversations, the Quissanga district governor was so impressed with proposals from VDOs that he would have preferred to fund most of their projects, had the district development budget not been reduced (7 million metical) by the government. The officials at Administrative Post (Mahate, Muaguide, Mucojo and Macomia-sede) and District Administrations (Quissanga, Meluco, Macomia and Metuge) provided very positive reviews about the VDOs. Most of the officials were quite impressed with the concept of VDOs. Out of 4 district governors, 3 opined that VDOs should be legally made responsible for development

of the village. The Meluco governor was however not sure about the possible conflict between local council and VDOs if the VDOs were made legally responsible and resourced for village development. The district governor however termed VDOs as people's organizations and local councils as extended organs of the government. But he found VDOs a



genuinely democratic and more effective structure for village development.

These opinions reflect very positive perceptions of government officials about the VDOs. However, the formal or systematic linkages between government and VDOs are not so strong. There are obvious evidences about regular interactions between local councils and the VDOs

(in fact, a new trend seems to be emerging in some of villages where VDO and local council presidents are the same person). But the link between VDOs and other organs of local government has many gaps. This gap is mainly due to two types of problems at the government level: (i) the development approach is very top-down with political connotations. Financial constraints at higher levels of government made the matter worse in the sense that even if the district council wished to support VDO projects, it had no resources to do so (ii) the officials at all levels lack development perspectives and development training. Except one (and only) woman officer at an Administrative Post (Macomia-sede), we did not find any other officer who sounded confidently capable to integrate the issues of local development with their own administrative mandates.

We did not find any example of link between VDOs and private sector as such in 7 VDO villages. In Primerio de Maio VDO village, there were some exchanges with timber merchants. It was more of a one-time support (painting the walls of village school was done by a timber merchant) in lieu of 'No objection from VDO' for extracting timber from the village forest. Further investigation in this incident revealed that in such cases usually only specific individuals used to get benefits earlier. But the presence of the VDO ensured that the timber merchant provided money for a common cause.. We were however informed (by the AKF) that systematic linkages do exist between VDOs and private sector in intervention areas of Erati and Mocimboa da Praia. During conversations with us, some officials at Post Administrative levels also mentioned that the functional barter system was operational between VDOs and local traders.

Interestingly, we found frequent 'one-sided' linkages between VDOs and NGOs (including the different programmes of AKF). This was also corroborated by the current chairperson of FOCAD, a Pemba based network of Civil Society Organizations in Cabo Delgado province. Most of the NGOs approached the VDOs for community mobilization in their projects related to agriculture, nutrition, health, gender etc. Once community mobilization was over, the NGOs did their project works in the community without keeping VDOs in the loop. As per the FOCAD Chairperson, the VDOs have strong linkages with their communities and so, they make NGO work easier. But NGOs do not remain engaged with VDOs as they do treat VDOs as something not related to their projects.

3.5 Governance of VDOs:

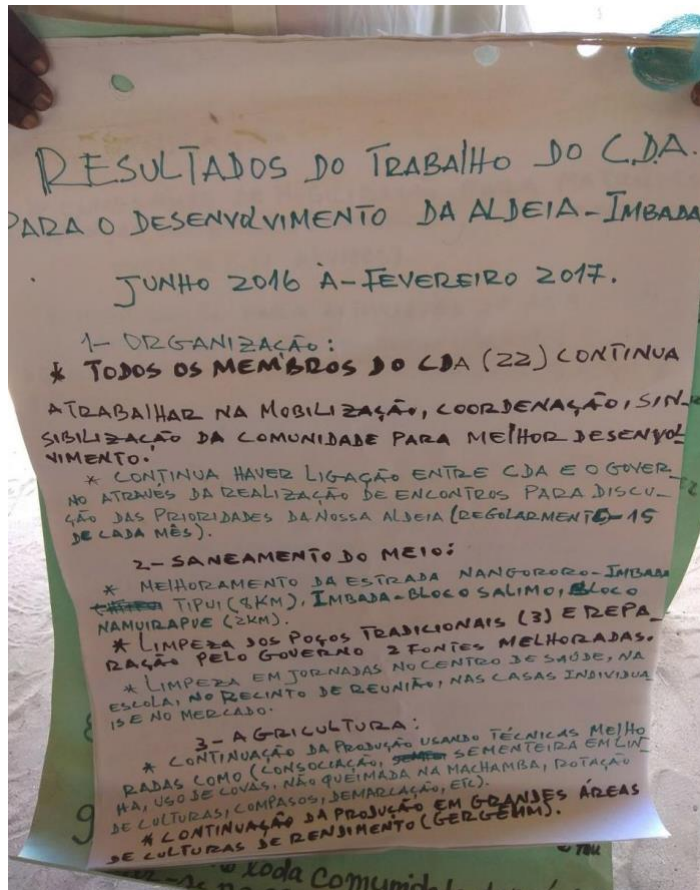
As discussed earlier, the democratic governance processes have been core of VDOs – in their constitution, composition and actions. From very beginning, AKF emphasized the importance of democratic mechanisms in the functioning of the VDOs. Even after more



than 3-5 years of gaps after initial orientations by the AKF, we found that most of the VDOs do sincerely try to follow democratic principles and practices in their engagements and actions.

In beginning VDOs used to meet fortnightly. The first fortnight meeting was an internal meeting of VDO members to discuss and decide upon their own actions. The second fortnightly meetings were usually meant to coordinate actions with various other groups (SHGs, CBOs and external actors) active in the villages. Over a period of time, second fortnightly (coordination) meetings have not been very regular. This is also because of the limited actions by the VDOs due to resource crises. But internal meetings of the VDOs take place, almost regularly, though not necessarily every month. There were 3 VDOs in the sample where the frequency of such meetings are quite irregular. On average, they do meet once or twice in 3 -4 months. One VDO reported that their last meeting took place about 3 months back.

During their internal meetings, the VDOs democratically deliberate upon their plans and decisions on actions. But the democratic nature of VDOs is not limited to their internal functions only. The VDOs also interact with other groups (Self Help Groups, Community Based Organizations, Farmers' group, etc) in the village for coordination and convergence of actions.



These interactions are also based on democratic values and practices.

We did not find any example of systematic social audits as such. But there is evidence that rudimentary internal and external accountability tools are being used by the VDOs in their functioning. The internal functional accountability tools are based on responsibility assigned to the member and her/his performances recorded in this regard. All the members of VDOs are focal points for different development themes. If any

member is found to be not serious to her/his assigned role, collective membership of the VDO democratically replace that member by another person from the village. For example, collective membership of the Namupala VDO in Metuge district recently replaced some of its members due to non-performance and/or absence from the VDO-meetings.

In case of external accountability, VDOs were encouraged and trained by AKF for promoting social audits in their villages. Most interviewed members of VDOs knew about the social audit. But it seems that none of the 8 sample VDOs ever practiced the social audits in a very systematic manner. This is because most of their works are around voluntary labour contributions and negligible cash supports from the communities. Those who have done some work through community collection, kept community informed about all the expenses incurred by the VDO. That process could be treated as a very crude form of social audit

The current trends suggest that when VDOs have appropriate technical and resource support, they would become more vibrant and their governance performance would also improve. It seems that with increased vibrancy and varieties in VDO-functioning, membership in VDOs would become more coveted. And then an efficient system of democratic election process for selection of VDO-members may be a future trend. With increase in development resources, the works of VDOs could be more varied and more complex. Then systematic social audit tools could be applied for transparency and efficacy of the development expenses.

3.6 Gaps in Strengthening of the VDOs

The VDO programme started with the aim of creating a community development structure in order to maximise the community development outcomes even with only a minimum available in available development resources. The programme's aim was to capacitate the community to collectively develop their development priorities, evolve their development plans and achieve the desired development outputs, using limited government and



community resources. Everything in this programme started on right track: Community groups were formed and named the VDOs, community ownership was promoted, groups were oriented and trained, resource mappings were done, prioritizations performed and plans were prepared. The way VDOs are still preserving their more than 5-7 years old flipcharts (nicely wrapped in protective clothes and softly handled during and after the displays) loudly reflect the sense of ownership of the VDOs on everything they wrote on their flipchart as vision, mission and activities-plan.

Initial successes of the community based on these early steps encouraged them to think big and act big. However, doing so successfully required that they receive further capacity building support from AKF so that VDOs could convert their plans into implementable actions. When VDOs needed AKF most, AKF had to withdraw from the field due its own programmatic

funding constraints. Almost at the same time, the Government of Mozambique drastically reduced its development support to local government. Petrol prices dipped and oil companies suspended their works, removing possible sources of private sector support. All these possible financial and technical resource providers became themselves constrained (to capacitate the VDOs). Consequently, the VDOs were left on their own. The disappearance of external capacity building and financial support was perhaps the biggest gap in the journey of VDOs.

On the part of AKF, it should have perhaps used maximum of its limited resources in building capacities of a minimum number of VDOs rather than thinly spreading financial and technical support across so many villages in so many districts. VDOs needed not only capacity building support, they also need handholding support, which are quite intense. Somehow funding gaps at the AKF level was one the biggest blow to momentum of VDOs' progress towards becoming people's organization capable of driving democratic development on their own.

VDOs are on demand side. They can't do anything unless the supply side becomes capable of providing 'supply'. Somehow AKF could not focus on sensitizing and building capacities of government officials (supply side). This gap is now more concerning when resources with supply side are weaker and VDOs also don't have any sources of ongoing external support. During field interactions, it was noticed that many government officials were genuinely interested in supporting VDO works/proposals. But none of them know 'how to do that'. Most of the officers don't know what is development or development planning and how development convergence could be promoted.

3.7. Sustainability of the VDOs

Out of 8 (4 strong and 4 weak, as categorised by the AKF) VDOs we interviewed, all are alive and more or less active as of November 2017. Five of them are 6-10 years old while the remaining three are 3-5 years old. The latest facilitation support received by any one of them was at least 3 years back when AKF was undertaking programme on capacity building of VDOs. It was a pleasant surprise to know that the oldest VDO surveyed conducted its last meeting in October 2017. There were 4 other VDOs whose monthly meetings take place regularly. The remaining 3 (interestingly relatively newer ones) are not so regular even though they keep meeting occasionally. As far as the coordination meetings are concerned, they do take place

only when some collective actions are required. Whether VDO meetings are regular or not, the members of all VDOs expressed the sense pride and achievements in being a member of their VDOs.

Why do VDOs keep meeting? What makes members feel proud of their VDO membership? Why do government officials appreciate the contribution of VDOs? The answer to all these questions come from the fact that VDOs are naturally inclined and aligned to the development of their communities. They are also accountable to the communities. Their functioning is democratic and transparent. In an era of no development around, the active VDOs stand out with their development actions. They have catalysed the pooling of meagre community resources to make differences in the lives of communities.

Surviving the social and development challenges and remaining relevant without any external support is admirable. But it is not so easy to remain relevant in the long run unless these VDOs receive appropriate resources and technical capacities. Community aspirations and desperations are increasing. VDOs could remain relevant only when they do appropriately respond to ever growing needs of their communities. Unfortunately, the absence of AKF type external facilitation support and the current financial crisis facing the Government of Mozambique (fortunately latest economic figures indicate better financial future) has made matter worse for the VDOs.

Though a sample of 8 VDOs is very small to draw any inference, some trends are evident. On the basis of interactions and experiences with these 8 VDOs, it seems that sustainability of a VDO becomes stronger if it receives intensive capacity support for a threshold period of 2-3 years and thereafter an enabling environment to continuously seek and receive external support. For example, all the VDOs who were formed in 2013-14 and thus did not receive longer supports from the AKF are less active than those who were formed earlier and so, did receive long term support.

The VDOs in Cabo Delgado, it seems, are capable of self-sustaining with little support from outside. But the question is sustainability for what and how? They should sustain to anchor village development and take it forward. But that is only possible when they continuously receive support from government and other actors. It is true that government has not been able to do anything for last 2 years due to its own resource constraints. It is also true that AKF

could not continue its support to VDOs due to its own resource constraints. But the current economic indicators suggest that government resources should improve sooner. Accordingly, it may be expected (interviewed government officials also reiterated so) that governmental support to these VDOs would be available in very near future, provided external facilitation supports are provided to both VDOs as well as the government to engage with each other.

It may also be expected that the big Oil and Gas company such as ANDARKO could provide CSR support to VDOs in future. Many other NGOs in future may partner with VDOs. But for everything to happen, it is important to provide immediate technical supports and handholding to VDOs so that they could not only survive (which they are already doing on their own) but they also keep adding value to the development of their villages. If such support is not made available to these VDOs sooner, it may be feared that invisible ripple effects (of having their own VDOs) in non-VDO villages may also suffer beside the dwindling of hopes of people in such an useful and only democratic process existing at local level.

To further support sustainability of VDOs and also their scaling up, discussions could be initiated with the Civil Society and the Government to provide some formal legitimacy to the concept and structure of the VDOs. The VDOs have great potential of becoming most efficient and most effective development partner of the government, the NGOs and the private sector in future.

AKF has both technical and credibility advantage over others. AKF knows VDOs and VDOs have fruitfully experienced (and so, still have trust in) AKF capacity building approaches. The government officials admire VDOs and also adore AKF. All these make AKF most suitable to evolve VDOs as a vibrant development facilitator with supports from the governmental and corporate development resources. But that requires AKF to also restructure its current (other) programmatic approaches by including VDO as point of entry (and so, primary unit to be supported by the AKF) for future community processes under its interventions.

4. Learning on the VDOs

On the basis of earlier observations and discussions, the following learning could be summarised about the VDOs:

The Concept of VDOs:

- (i) The concept of the VDO seems to be well accepted locally for seeding of the participatory democratic development processes at the village level.
- (ii) The VDO programme seems to be well received by the community and also to an extent by the government. The concept, structure and norms of functioning were generally accepted by the community. But in some places VDOs were not sure (even though they were doing everything which a VDO is supposed to do) if they were 'authorised' to call themselves as a 'VDO' when AKF's project on VDOs was no longer supporting them.
- (iii) AKF's other programme (on agriculture, nutrition, gender etc.) as well as other local NGOs could not appropriately sustain their engagements with the VDOs though many of them initially took supports from the VDOs, in those villages where VDOs were operational, for community mobilization under their project.

Composition of the VDOs:

- (i) Total number of male and female members are almost the same in the list of VDO-membership. However, women's participation in VDOs is significantly weaker than that of men in decision making processes of the VDOs.
- (ii) Majority of VDO members are younger (25-45 years) and relatively more educated.
- (iii) Selection of members are based on evolving community consensus, which is essentially assessing majority supports for an interested candidate. The basis of consensus lies in selection of candidates, who are usually 'wise' and 'active' persons of 'high character' in the eyes of community.
- (iv) Membership of VDO is not permanent. In case of non-performance, membership could be terminated. The president, secretary and other active members of VDOs

take such decisions and inform the community. Replacement is selected following the process of community consensus.

Credibility of the VDOs:

- (i) VDOs have good credibility among their communities and also among the local government officials.
- (ii) However, with increasing resource and capacity constraints, VDO members are concerned about their credibility in future as they are not able to respond appropriately to community needs.
- (iii) In future, VDOs could become a very credible and effective link between the demand side and supply side of governance, if sustained external supports are provided in this regard.

Capacities of the VDOs:

- (i) VDOs are seemingly the most capable organizations to mobilize communities and community resources in pursuit of community-driven objectives.
- (ii) VDOs have their own intrinsic democratic capacities to undertake collective works quite effectively.
- (iii) The VDOs have been trained in participatory methodologies. But capacities of different VDOs are uneven in taking forward AKF taught VDO-processes such as participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring etc.
- (iv) Individual focal points (members) for different themes in the VDOs, in general, lack visioning and planning capacities on those themes.
- (v) The VDOs on their own lack linkage and negotiation capacities.
- (vi) VDOs in general lack managerial and entrepreneurial capacities.

Functioning of the VDOs:

- (i) VDOs are democratic, transparent and inclusive in their functioning and so, they are also evolving as custodian of democratic practices at the community levels, which could be an important area for future supports to strengthen the VDOs.
- (ii) VDOs are only actors currently who are spearheading community level development actions for public goods.

- (iii) VDOs have been able to address basic development issues at community level and so, are functionally relevant to the communities in their limited ways.
- (iv) The upscaling of VDO functions could be possible only when they are appropriately supported with external development resources and suitable technical-managerial capacities with regular guidance and supports from external facilitating agencies.
- (v) The social sector contributions (school enrolment, environmental and sanitation campaigns etc.) of VDOs are quite visible and note-worthy, considering the resource constraints at all (community, VDO and government) levels
- (vi) VDOs have been very effective in mitigating intra-community conflicts.

Accountability of the VDOs:

- (i) VDO members are individually accountable to the collective membership of their group for their assigned roles, social behaviour and actions
- (ii) VDOs are self-accountable to the communities for plans prepared with the community. This could also be attributed to over dependence of VDOs on mobilized community resources.
- (iii) The financial accountability of VDOs seems to be quite strong. However, it should be mentioned here that current functions of VDOs require negligible financial exchanges.

Linkages of the VDOs:

- (i) Linkages with community quite strong. Linkage with Local Council are functionally fine.
- (ii) Linkage with government used to be better when AKF support was available to the VDOs⁷. In the absence of this support, the functional linkages of VDOs with local government have dwindled. AKF used to provide linkage support through direct interface, proposal submission and multi-stakeholder dialogues. Currently, there

⁷ In his comments, Mr Sujeet Sarkar of AKF mentioned that “VDOs were linked with district Government in three ways viz. directly interfacing VDOs with the District Government, whereby VDOs not only share their needs and priorities, but also submit proposal, organize problem solving camps with line departments, and conduct multi stake holders dialogue on specific themes....”

are no other available mechanisms for the VDOs to directly interface with the government. VDOs do not have their own representative at post administration and district level, who could pursue their cause at those levels.

- (iii) VDOs did receive support (before 2015) on those themes which are priorities of the government. But VDOs are generally not well aware about the governmental programmes.
- (iv) Linkage with private sector rudimentary and evolving. This could be due to almost absence of private sector actors in the areas of operations of the VDOs.
- (v) Linkage with local NGOs almost missing or at best opportunistic.

AKF and VDOs:

- (i) AKF's initial support to VDOs was quite constructive and very useful. However, withdrawal of support (due to unexpected funding issues at AKF level) was a bit disappointing for the VDOs
- (ii) AKF could not be in continuous touch with the sample VDOs for last 3 years and this has affected both the morale and capacities of the VDOs
- (iii) AKF's other programmes do still operate in the areas where VDOs exist, but those programmes have not been able to do much for the VDOs. This is due to the obvious programmatic compulsions (in other programmes) to focus on the committed deliverables within limited resources.
- (iv) VDOs still look for support from AKF. In fact, the visit of evaluation team instilled new hopes among VDOs that AKF support to them would soon be available again

5. Ways Forward

VDOs began as a programme of AKF. But over time, VDOs are emerging as people's organizations for democratic development at the village level. Both the presence and actions of the VDOs have created positive perceptions in the communities and positive changes in at least some development outcomes in the villages. Even the local councils, post administration and district authorities have very high opinions about the VDOs and have high hopes and expectations for the VDOs in future. This hope, as some comments in the field connoted, is also linked to hope with democracy and development. If that is the case, VDOs seems to have become a symbol of democracy and development also. So, it is now more important to focus on further strengthening and sustaining the concept of VDOs, to support the momentum of democracy and development at grassroots levels.

There are challenges, as reported by AKF, in terms of mobilizing sufficient funding support for undertaking VDO strengthening programmes. But those challenges need to be negotiated in the best possible ways. With increasing time gaps in proving renewed support to the VDOs, the earlier programmatic gains may be lost. Communities may feel 'left alone'. Something should be done sooner rather than later for supporting these VDOs.

As a preliminary measures (This could be just a reconnect measure. It can't be substitute to the intensive support that VDOs actually require), AKF should explore opportunities under its own current programmes, wherever these programmes operate in VDO areas, to re-connect with the VDOs. These reconnections would refresh and rejuvenate the VDOs. The reconnect could begin with inviting local VDOs to attend different trainings, workshops to provide them exposure and confidence. This should not require big additional costs. Other ways to provide handholding support to the VDOs could be to explore if a VDO or cluster of VDOs could act as partner of AKF for delivering some programmatic outputs (such as public education campaigns, participatory planning and actions etc). The AKF projects, if encouraged to include VDOs in their programmatic loop, could easily find different ways to strengthen the capacity and visibility of different VDOs. This will further strengthen the bond between VDOs and AKF which will be very useful for AKF when it re-starts the full-fledged programme for strengthening the VDOs.

AKF should strive to ensure that VDOs are not taken by others as an exclusive programme of AKF (somehow this confusion has crept in- though there are no evidences, either in actions or utterances from AKF, that AKF was holding the VDOs as their exclusive right) . The VDOs should be projected as democratic facilitators of the demand side and so, everyone should strengthen them. Once that happens, AKF should also discuss with the other NGOs and FOCAD if other NGOs could also find out ways to 'link' with VDOs.

In terms of future VDO programmes, AKF should look for at least 3 years of funding support. Considering the scale of available resources, minimum numbers of VDOs should receive the maximum support for 3 years or so. On the basis of earlier discussions on findings from past experiences, a period of 2-3 years seems to be the threshold period for maturing of a VDO. Since the concept of VDOs is closely linked to demand and supply side behaviours and actions, the intervention of AKF should provide equal attentions on linking with – and capacity building of – the supply side (which in this case, may be government, private sector and also other NGOs).

The future programmatic interventions to support VDOs may include the following components:

1. Capacity Building

- (i) Capacity Building of Communities: The Community should be re-oriented and encouraged to actively take ownership of their development. National and international examples (A/V materials) should be shown to raise the aspirations and hopes of the people. Good governance principles should be popularized. Efforts should be made to prepare communities as an ideal "Gram Sabha" (as in Indian Constitution). A campaign mode of sensitization and orientation could be helpful for large population. It would in turn also build positive environment for growth of the VDOs.
- (ii) Capacity Building of VDOs: AKF has sufficient experience working with VDOs across Cabo Delgado. It has also the list of strong and weak VDOs. On the basis of these experiences, it should conduct 'fresh' Training Needs Assessment and prepare a 3-years capacity building framework for the VDOs. The framework should also consider the 'exit strategies' that will inform the sustainability of these institutions. The

capacity building programmes should follow a cascading approach. To spread the ownership of the VDO movement, deliberate efforts should be made to include local NGOs, local officials and existing VDO members as Master Trainers. The training inputs should be aligned to defined themes at VDO level (focal points of the VDO). The Organizational development, financial, managerial and entrepreneurial capacities are also important component of future capacity building initiatives.

- (iii) Capacity Building of Supply Side: It is very important that local officials, local NGOs and private sector should be sensitized and capacitated to actively support participatory development processes. The development perspectives and capacities of the supply side is rather weak and so, this would require good investment and long term engagements. After developing perspectives of supply side to a given level, AKF should conduct joint capacity building of demand and supply side on some themes to promote common understandings and also to promote linkages.

2. *Linkages Building and Networking*: District is a functional administrative unit of the Government of Mozambique. As in many countries, government structures in Mozambique are also top-down. The local governmental supports could be catalysed for VDOs at the top level when deliberate efforts are made to influence the officials at that level. Accordingly a structural arrangement should be evolved at the district level to continuously network with government, private sector and NGOs in the district. These influencing mechanisms should be made an integral part of the programme. Over a period of time, VDOs could be federated to have their own structure at district level to influence decisions at district and post administration levels. This federation could also serve as a liaison with private sector and other civil society organizations.

As part of capacity building, AKF should build capacities of some VDOs and should provide targeted support to some VDOs to help them act as programmatic partners for those activities which add to the development agency roles of the VDOs. If such pilots succeed, individual VDOs and a coalition/network of VDOs could have sufficient technical and financial resources in future for facilitating community development.

3. *Research and Advocacy:* Research should provide inputs to advocacy as well as periodic capacity building components of the programme. Some interesting examples of prospective research could be: VDOs and Local Consultative Councils do operate in the same village, so systematic research should be undertaken to identify the most suitable ways to define the constructive relationship between the two entities. Accordingly, programmatic interventions should be developed to also mitigate the possible conflicts, if any in future.

Research based advocacy efforts should be sustained for providing 'formal legitimacy' for VDOs in the larger governance system. This could also lead to systematize and support the process of decentralization in terms of actual devolutions of powers and resources for undertaking local development. Allocation of decentralized structures and resources would also be more enabling for the VDOs. Thus VDO programme should (though largely) invest at local levels but proportionate investments at district, provincial and national levels are necessary to make better impact at the local levels. Local efforts won't sustain unless advocacy interventions are not made for enabling supports from national and provincial levels. The advocacy efforts should also use VDO experiences to influence decentralization policy of Mozambique.

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