



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH



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AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Strategies to improve the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in the promotion and defense of Human Rights and safeguarding civic space in Mozambique

- On March 13, 2024, the Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH) held a round table in partnership with the Civil Society Training and Learning Center and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SouthernDefenders), bringing together more than 30 Human Rights Defenders in the city of Beira.



1. Introduction



The main objective of the Round Table was to strengthen the action capacity of women Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique. The activity, through the IGUAL Program, brought together a total of 37 participants, 29 women and 8 men.

During the meeting, strategies were discussed to expand and consolidate the voices of women Human Rights Defenders in the promotion and defense of Human Rights, as well as to protect civic space in the country.

The initiative demonstrated the continued commitment of RMDDH and its partners to promote the active participation of women

in the defense of Human Rights. Recognizing the challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders, especially in contexts where women are often marginalized, the roundtable provided a safe space to share experiences, exchange knowledge and discuss strategies.

Furthermore, the collaboration between RMDDH, SouthernDefenders and CESC highlighted the importance of cooperation between civil society organizations in the pursuit of a more inclusive and fairer environment. By joining forces, these organizations strengthen their ability to face challenges and promote significant changes in favor of Human Rights in Mozambique.

2. Methodology



the Round Table followed a participatory approach to ensure that participants gained effective control over the topics covered.

The event comprised three significant panels aimed at comprehending the pivotal role of women in safeguarding and advancing Human Rights, acknowledging the hurdles they encounter in promoting and protecting Human Rights, and devising strategies to enhance the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in advocating for and defending Human Rights while preserving civic space in Mozambique.

The first panel addressed the topic “Introduction to the role of women Human Rights Defenders and diagnosis of the current situation of women Human Rights Defenders”. In this panel, social activists and public defenders from the region came together to deepen their understanding of the significant role played by

women in defending Human Rights.

The second panel was on “Challenges and risks faced by women Human Rights Defenders”. In this panel, an x-ray was made of the current situation of female Human Rights Defenders. The panel was made up of the Nucleus of Women’s Associations of Sofala, represented by Estrela Mboa and the Mozambican Bar Association and Human Rights Defender, represented by Stela Santos.

The last panel gave space to the discussion on “Strategies to improve the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in promoting and defending Human Rights and safeguarding civic space in Mozambique”.

Discussions focused on identifying effective ways to empower and support women Human Rights Defenders, recognizing the unique challenges they face and seeking concrete solutions to overcome them.

3. Introduction to the role of women Human Rights Defenders and diagnosis of the current situation of women Human Rights Defenders



The event, marked by the presence of the Vice-President of SouthernDefenders, Tanele Maseko, and the Directorate of Provincial Services for Gender, Children and Social Action of Sofala, represented by Dr. Natália Pinzo, provided an open space for discussion and sharing of strategies.

In the opening notes, the representative of the Directorate of Provincial Services for Gender, Children and Social Action of Sofala, Natália Pinzo, highlighted the importance of tools such as the great Beijing Platform, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the policy of gender and its implementation strategy as instruments for the promotion and protection of women in all spheres of society. She highlighted the fundamental role

of women in building the country and social justice, specifically in the province of Sofala.

Natália Pinzo emphasized the progress of women in overcoming prejudice and demonstrating their daily work in protecting and promoting the Human Rights of other women and society in general.

She also recognized the major challenges faced by women, including growing conservatism in policies and value systems, which limit women's rights, and the need for a cross-gender approach across different public, private, NGO and civil society sectors.

Natália Pinzo concluded her approach by wishing all women Human Rights Defenders success and encouraging them to continue the fight for Human Rights.



During her inspiring speech, Tanele Maseko, Vice-President of SouthernDefenders, highlighted the crucial importance of strengthening the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique. She emphasized that, despite the progress made, women Human Rights Defenders continued to face significant obstacles in their fight for Human Rights.

Maseko highlighted the need to recognize and value the unique contributions of women Human Rights Defenders, who are often underestimated and marginalized. She emphasized the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces so that women can fully participate in the process of promoting and defending Human Rights.

Additionally, Maseko shared practical strategies to strengthen women's agency, including supporting capacity building, strengthening support networks, and promoting women's political and social participation at all levels of society.

Finally, the Vice-President of SouthernDefenders called on participants to unite in solidarity and action, highlighting the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach to addressing the challenges faced.

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4. Challenges and risks faced by women Human Rights Defenders

Women Human Rights Defenders face several unique challenges due to the intersection of their gender identity with other forms of discrimination. They are subject to a wide range of violence, including physical, sexual and psychological, many times as a way of silencing them and discouraging them from continuing their work. Furthermore, they are often vilified and stigmatized, being labeled as “radical” or “subversive” to undermine their credibility and public support. As Estrela Mboa reinforced, “Women’s Human Rights are violated at alarming levels today, covering a range of issues such as domestic violence, rape, early marriages, sexual harassment in the workplace and at school, as well as inadequate care in maternity wards, often resulting in femicides.”

The risk of murder and enforced disappearance is a constant concern for these women.

They face serious threats to their security, often from state agents, paramilitary groups or other non-state actors who seek to silence their voices. “Women Human Rights Defenders are the target of threats, intimidation and attacks by those with the duty to safeguard their rights”, highlighted Stela Santos.

Furthermore, digital harassment and *online surveillance* are becoming increasingly common, with women Human Rights Defenders being targets of cyberattacks, *hacking of personal accounts and online smear campaigns*, which can profoundly affect their safety and emotional well-being.

Despite these challenges, women Human Rights Defenders continue to play a fundamental role in promoting justice, rights realization and equality in their communities and beyond.



5. Strategies to improve the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in promoting and defending Human Rights and safeguarding civic space in Mozambique



The last panel provided an important space for the exchange of ideas and experiences, aiming to improve the agency of women Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique, strengthen their capacity to promote and protect Human Rights and guarantee the safeguarding of a civic space vibrant and inclusive in the country.

During the panel, several approaches were explored, such as strengthening support networks among women Defenders, promoting female leadership in Human Rights organizations and movements, access to resources and adequate financing for their initiatives, as well as raising awareness in society and authorities to the issues faced by women Human Rights Defenders.

Furthermore, strategies were discussed to ensure the safety and protection of women Defenders, considering the frequent risks and threats they face due to their work. This involved the need for more effective policies and protection mechanisms, as well as the implementation of practical measures to prevent

violence and intimidation against these Defenders. In addition to these measures, some other strategies were discussed, including strengthening the leadership capacity of women Defenders through training and mentoring programs. These aim to develop leadership and negotiation skills, essential for their role as agents of change in their communities; promoting solidarity among women Defenders is a priority, with the establishment of support networks.

Furthermore, creating safe spaces, both physical and virtual, is an important strategy. "These spaces provide a safe environment where women can meet, discuss and plan their actions without fear of retaliation or violence", said Naira Cardoso, Human Rights Defender.

Finally, Meamande Wamukwamba reinforced that adequate protection was essential for women Human Rights Defenders to continue their work in favor of Human Rights. Investing in knowledge about protection services at all levels is a crucial strategy to strengthen the actions of these women.



6. Lessons Learned

It is crucial to recognize and strengthen support networks among women Defenders, allowing for the sharing of resources, experiences and solidarity. Furthermore, it is essential to actively promote female leadership in Human Rights organizations and movements, expanding their representation and influence.

Ensuring access to adequate resources and financing is essential to empower these women in their initiatives to promote and protect Human Rights. Likewise, it is necessary to develop strategies to raise awareness among society and authorities about the issues faced by women Human Rights Defenders, seeking support and recognition for their work.

To ensure the safety and protection of Defenders, it is essential to implement more effective policies and protection mechanisms, along with practical measures to prevent vio-

lence and intimidation. At the same time, investing in training and mentoring programs is essential to strengthen your leadership capacity and develop essential skills for your role as an agent of change.

Establishing and strengthening support and solidarity networks among women Defenders is another important measure, recognizing the relevance of mutual support and cooperation. Furthermore, prioritizing the creation of safe spaces, both physical and virtual, where these women can meet, discuss and plan their actions without fear of intimidation or violence, is essential.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize the importance of investing in knowledge about protection services at all levels, to strengthen the actions of women Human Rights Defenders and guarantee their adequate protection in their activities.

MESA-REDONDA
AMPLIANDO A VOZ DAS MULHERES DEFENSORAS DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

ESTRATÉGIAS PARA MELHORAR A AGÊNCIA DAS MULHERES DEFENSORAS DE DIREITOS HUMANOS NA PROMOÇÃO E DEFESA DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS E NA SALVAGUARDA DO ESPAÇO CÍVICO EM MOÇAMBIQUE

13 DE MARÇO DE 2024 | 09:00 Horas | BEIRA TERRACE HOTEL

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NOTAS DE ABERTURA

- DRA. TANELE MASEKO - Vice-Presidente da SouthernDefenders
- DRA. NATÁLIA PINTO - Direcção dos Serviços Provinciais de Género, Criança

PAINEL I | PAINEL II

- DRA. ANA FERNANDA - Advogada de Direitos Humanos e Oficial de Género
- DRA. CATARINA JUMA - Pressão Nacional para os Direitos Humanos - PNCH
- DRA. STELA SANTOS - Ordem dos Advogados de Moçambique e Defensora de Direitos Humanos
- DRA. ESTRELA MBOAM - Núcleo das Associações de Mulheres de Sofala

PAINEL III

- MEAMANDE WAMUKWAMBA - SouthernDefenders
- DRA. SHAISTA DE ARAÚJO - Especialista de Igualdade de Género e em Empoderamento
- NAIRA CARDOSO - Observatório das Mulheres

MODERAÇÃO

- NGANDIFE KARINA - RMDH
- MAGA MENDONÇA - Oficial de Género

13 DE MARÇO DE 2024 | 09 horas | BEIRA TERRACE HOTEL



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Almejamos um país livre e seguro para os Defensores dos Direitos Humanos, um ambiente favorável ao desenvolvimento das comunidades e ao envolvimento da juventude como potenciais Defensores dos Direitos Humanos.

We aspire to a nation where Human Rights defenders can operate freely and securely, fostering community development and empowering youth to become effective advocates for Human Rights.



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