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Research Report

Accountability through dialogue: the Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva in Mozambique

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Accountability through Dialogue: the *Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva* in Mozambique

Executive Summary

Accountability is a central feature of democracy. Governments must explain what they are doing, justify why they are doing certain things and not others. Moreover, accountability increases the likelihood of the improvement of public services if citizens have the political scope to hold politicians and administrators accountable, and potentially sanction them. Consequently, developing countries as well as the OECD-donor community have committed themselves to working towards the improvement of domestic accountability in developing countries. In many developing countries, accountability is exercised through both formal and informal institutions.

This paper summarises the results of an empirical study on accountability in Mozambique. It focuses on the *Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva* (PAI, Open and Inclusive Presidency), a legally not codified institution for accountability introduced by President Armando E. Guebuza. It provides a public forum for the president to engage in a dialogue with the population and the local administrations, in combination with an ongoing process of decentralisation. This study shows that the interaction between formal and more informal institutions has a mixed influence on policymaking and democracy. Overall, there is an untapped potential to improve the PAI as an institution for accountability that strengthens formal institutions.

In analysing the interplay between the PAI and formal institutions in two Mozambican provinces, we assess it to be a relatively effective monitoring instrument.

- The PAI fosters a top-down logic of coherence and implementation of development policies at all state levels. In doing so, it particularly contributes to aligning development policies to the government's strategic five-year plan.
- The PAI has the potential to enhance the quality of democracy, as it offers the opportunity for the provision of accountability by different levels of the executive and a new venue for citizen participation in an environment in which other forms of participation are largely constrained. However, thus far, this potential for accountability and participation has not yet fully unfolded, because the process is dominated by the executive in processes of political decision making.
- The PAI creates a structure with challenging consequences for a coherent planning and implementation process at the sub-national level. It potentially poses a threat to the development of effective independent institutions at the local level, such as district administrations, municipalities and *Conselhos Consultivos* (consultative councils) that are actually tasked with ensuring a coherent implementation of development policies.

The PAI's contribution to the Mozambican decentralisation process can be improved by raising awareness on the functions and responsibilities of formal institutions at the sub-national level and by more closely aligning the PAI's follow-up process to already existing policy processes. For donors it is not recommended to directly interact with the PAI in development aid, but to focus on its effect on existing development programmes.

Accountability improves socio-economic performance, limits the power of the government and prevents corruption. Developing countries as well as the OECD-donor community have committed themselves to improving domestic accountability in the developing world. Many developing countries have introduced the basic formal institutions of multiparty democracy, however, informal, and thus legally not formalised, institutions continue to dominate preferences, expectations and interactions of political actors. In this context, the importance of informal institutions for accountability in controlling governments has been controversially debated. Informal institutions might result either in an improved or stagnant implementation of development policies, or a deepening or reduction in democratic quality.

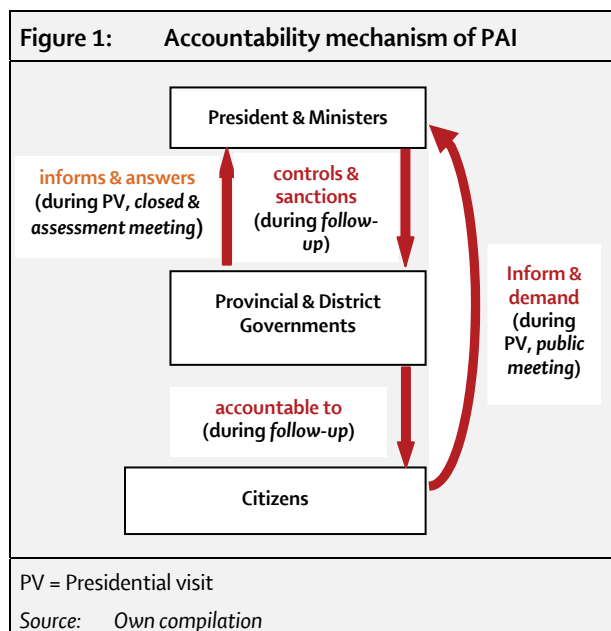
In the case of Mozambique one finds evidence for both scenarios after 2005. The interplay between local accountability institutions and the *Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva* (PAI) of President Armando E. Guebuza, shows conducive as well as hindering effects on policymaking and democratic quality in eight districts in the provinces Sofala (Búzi, Caia, Dondo, Gorongosa) and Nampula (Angoche, Mogincual, Mogovolas, Nacarôa).

The PAI: goals and structure for the provision of accountability

In the still centralised system of political decision making in Mozambique, the PAI so far largely serves as a monitoring instrument of the executive, in which the sub-national level is accountable to the national level. The PAI is designed to guarantee the coherence and implementation of the national five-year programme, to provide accountability, to improve the provision of public services and the presence of the state in rural areas. Following a top-down approach, the national government – represented by President Guebuza himself – aims at holding local administrations accountable in all 128 districts in a state territory of roughly 800.000 square kilometres. In order to do so, the PAI follows a policy cycle (see figure 1) in three steps – preparation (6–8 weeks), performance (day of presidential visit) and follow-up (continuous). Since the presidential visit is the only public element of the PAI, it attracts most attention and is considered to be its core element. However, the PAI comprises an extensive and non-public preparation and follow-up process, which absorbs human and institutional resources to a very large extent. Overall, the PAI allows for accountability in the relationship between the population and the district administration, which is not provided for in the constitutional setting.

A complex accountability mechanism unfolds during the one-day presidential visit to a district (see figure 1). A fact-finding mission (composed of President’s office and the Ministries of State Administration and of Development and Planning) prepares for the visit. This consists of three main elements. First, the district government reports on the state of socioeconomic development in the district and

answers questions from the President during a closed meeting with the district and provincial administration. Second, the president delivers a speech and gives the floor to a limited number of people (about 5–15), to allow them to articulate their grievances and their development concerns during a public meeting (*comício*). While the people of the district are theoretically given the chance to demand accountability from the government, the *comício* also serves as an instrument of control for the president to verify the information provided during the first meeting with the district government. To conclude the day, an assessment (*balanço*) with the province and district administration as well as the Consultative Councils takes place. It summarises the results of the day as outlined by the president and sets the objectives for further actions. Third, as part of the follow-up process, district administrations are held accountable for the successful implementation of the presidential recommendations from above (national and provincial level), and below (citizens).



PAI objectives are fixed in so-called *matrizes*. Given the constitutionally determined, rather hierarchical, design of decentralised institutions in Mozambique, the *matrizes* then become the central instrument of provincial and district administrations for mid-term planning and implementing of the results of each PAI. In cases where the PAI uncovers the misconduct of local governments, the President has the power to sanction by dismissing administrators.

Strengths and weaknesses of the PAI

Facilitating policy coherence versus creating burdens for policy planning

There is a confusing variety of development plans in Mozambique at the different levels of state. Donors’ strategies encourage this complexity. In this context, coherence of

Table 1: Informal accountability – influences on development policy and democratic quality		
	Conducive	Hindering
Coherence on different levels of state	Assessment of implementation of government's 5-year-plan (<i>balanço</i>)	Co-existence of two planning instruments
	Development orientation of concerns and <i>matrizes</i>	Low capacity of local administration to systematically integrate <i>matrizes</i>
	Control at local level	
	Awareness of the substance of existing development policies	No traceable link between <i>matrizes</i> and existing formal policies
Implementation of development policies	Priorisation of implementation of PAI's objectives	Sidelining of formal policies because of lack of additional resources and absorption of district capacities
Interplay of formal and informal institutions	Creating incentives for effective and transparent work of district administration	Threat of re-centralisation of decentralised decision making
	Clarification of role and functions of formal, sub-national institutions	Competition with formal local institutions
Democratic Quality	Contribution to change of democratic attitudes	Lack of representation
	Creation of additional forums for accountability and participation	
Source: own compilation		

different development policies at all levels is a precondition for effective development policy. On the one hand, the PAI is a controlling instrument of the executive that furthers the coherence between formal contents, priorities and goals of development plans at different levels of state in a top-down fashion. Popular demands are mainly of public interest and refer to sectors such as infrastructure (27%), and education (22%). These are key elements in formal policy plans, particularly the *Plano Econômico Social e Orçamento Distrital* (PESOD, Economic and Social District Plan and Budget). The PESOD is the annual plan of the district administration, which needs to respect the general parameters of the government's five-year plan. There is a problematic co-existence of two planning instruments, PESOD and *matrizes*, which might create incoherence between various development policies. Moreover, district governments have low capacities and limited political power to reject the introduction of new plans (*matrizes*) and to insist on adhering to their formal, already existing policy plans.

Fostering the implementation of the PAI's results versus sidelining formal policies

The implementation of existing development plans is in danger of being sidelined because the PAI's recommen-

dations, left by the President for the district administration, becomes priority at the district level. District administrators know that they are constantly controlled by the provincial and national governments, and are liable to be dismissed, if they do not perform well. The President has repeatedly punished district administrators during or shortly after his visit as a result of hearing complaints from the population regarding the administrators' behaviour. Hence, the PAI sets strong incentives to primarily implement the *matrizes*. It is left to the institutions in charge at the respective state level to acquire additional financial resources for the *matrizes'* implementation. This undermines budgeting of existing policies.

Emphasising decentralised institutions versus threat of re-centralisation

The PAI takes place in the context of a large country, with the majority of the population living in remote rural areas, mostly below the national poverty line and often feeling neglected by the central government. Enhanced interaction with the central government through the PAI, however, creates incentives for the effective and transparent work of the district administration. Nevertheless, there is a risk that the PAI might result in the (re-)centralisation of once decentralised decision making through a vertical top-down accountability mechanism, which puts the highest representative of the executive at the centre of political decision making at all state levels in Mozambique. Consequently, the PAI can be considered to be in competition with already existing formal institutions.

Supporting accountability and participation versus establishing low levels of representation

The PAI offers a forum for demanding and providing accountability. It has the potential to contribute to the transformation of democratic attitudes, because it offers an additional forum for participation. During the *comício*, citizens are given the opportunity to raise their concerns and are put in a position, which could allow them to demand accountability from the central and decentralised administration. Given the sanctions that can be imposed after the PAI, citizens can have the experience as part of the PAI that articulating interests and demanding accountability can actually make a difference. However, there are strong indications that many of the citizens, who are permitted to raise their concerns and thus demand accountability during the *comício*, are actually pre-selected by the district administration or local structures of the governing party. As a consequence of this possible pre-selection, the concerns raised during the *comício* cannot necessarily be perceived as being representative of the concerns of the community as a whole. This situation is problematic with regard to the apparent prioritising of the *matrizes* over development plans.

Policy recommendations... ...for the Mozambican Government

The following recommendations are based on the central government's own objectives for the PAI (Gabinete de Estudos 2009):

Continue to use the PAI to raise awareness of the functions and responsibilities of formal democratic institutions at the decentralised level. *Conselhos Consultivos* (consultative councils) and district administration can be more comprehensively involved in an inclusive consultation process with the population in the preparatory phase of the PAI, in order to determine the most pressing concerns of the district population. Moreover, the PAI can help to create an understanding on which formal institution can be held accountable for which policy.

Assess, whether the follow-up process of the PAI can be organised in more close alignment to processes of policy plans already in existence (in particular PESOD).

Increasingly use the PAI for purposes of civic education to clarify, which formal institution has to provide accountability to the district population. Encourage citizens to directly demand accountability from these institutions.

Ensure the representativeness of the population's statements during the *comício* phase of the PAI, by clearly stating that any form of pre-selection by the district administration or local party structures will not be tolerated by the president. Setting transparent rules for the selection process might increase the legitimacy of the PAI further.

Finally, the transparency of the PAI process can be further enhanced by avoiding scheduling PAIs close to local and national election dates.

...for the Mozambican Civil Society Organisations

CSOs engaged in political advocacy and the media might engage with small CSOs at the district and provincial levels before and during the PAI in order to build capacity, create awareness of the PAI's influence on district development and generally enhance the transparency of the process.

CSOs dealing with the improvement of public service delivery, primarily at the sub-national level, might engage with representatives of formal institutions at the district level during the preparation of the annual PESOD, and use the PESOD as the foundation for holding the district administration, and ultimately the president, accountable during the PAI.

...for International Donors

The PAI is merely a national political process and an institution for accountability. It is **not** recommended to directly interact with the PAI in the framework of development aid. Instead, focus on understanding the PAI and its effect on existing development strategies and use this understanding to optimise such programmes.

Complementary to providing budget support, legislative, consultative and judicial institutions in particular have a high potential for demanding accountability from the executive at all levels of state. The technical support of these institutions, particularly with regard to their capacity of controlling government expenditure at the local level, brings great potential for future donor engagement in Mozambique.

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This Policy Brief summarises the main findings of a comprehensive analysis on „Accountability in Mozambique: The Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva“ by the author and participants of the DIE's postgraduate programme, namely Charlotte Heyl, Stefan Langer, Henrick Maihack, Anna-Luisa Peruzzo and Benjamin Reichenbach.