



CYCLONES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE 2019 ELECTIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE

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Domingos M. Rosario

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has been increasingly affected in a cyclical way by natural disasters. In low-income countries such as Mozambique, these disasters have damaged the social and economic infrastructure that is key to making elections possible. The 2019 presidential, legislative and provincial elections in the country were held in the midst of disasters caused by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, as a result of which schools, power grids and roads were destroyed and people were forced to move to safer locations.

The disasters that occurred right in the middle of the 2019 election period took the country by surprise. Mozambique had never experienced any disasters of this magnitude while organizing elections before, and the public authorities found themselves in a difficult and uncertain situation as they searched for solutions. In addition to these emergency management difficulties, the country was facing an economic crisis (Ballard 2018), which would also have implications for the elections. With no experience in dealing with extreme weather events during an election period, the election authorities were unable to draw up plans to mitigate these disasters and their direct effects on the elections.

Resettlement assistance was the urgent priority for the authorities. As the resettlement process neared completion, albeit without the documents required for people to register to vote, the most important issues were to raise funds for new infrastructure, and then to acquire materials to make the electoral process viable as part of the government's strategy to rebuild electoral capacity in the areas affected by the cyclones and prevent them from being dominated by its political opponents.

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The dual disasters displaced populations and exacerbated logistical difficulties. The registration brigades set up in the rural areas affected by the cyclones were unable to register voters due to a lack of electricity. In addition, displaced voters who had lost their identification documents were prevented from registering since they had no witnesses to confirm their identity. Even in resettled locations where they were known to the local administrative authorities, they found no community support to vouch for them. Even those who did manage to register did not receive their polling cards as printers constantly broke down. Finally, a reduced workforce and lack of funds prevented the local election authorities from stepping in to resolve technical issues such as broken printers or lack of mobile equipment.

An election campaign conducted against the backdrop of infrastructure destroyed by the cyclones favoured the ruling party to the detriment of opposition parties. Benefiting from the use of state resources, the ruling party used the means at its disposal, including government security systems, to promote its election campaign in the areas affected by the cyclones and the insurgency by guerrillas from the country's national resistance party, Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO). Opposition parties had their personnel detained and lacked the means to reach many places affected by the cyclones. They also struggled to get access to the people living in resettlement or accommodation centres. The distribution of supplies in these centres also became a political tool. The people in the centres were constantly in meetings or queuing for food assistance, which became a way to garner or buy votes for those who held power in the state administration (CDD/Catholic Church 2019a).

In the specific case of the 2019 elections, the areas affected by cyclones Idai and Kenneth were also affected by terrorism, and political and military conflict.

In addition to people in some of the areas affected by the cyclones not having polling cards, others were faced by military conflicts that made the electoral process even more difficult. This was especially the case in the far-northern province of Cabo Delgado, which suffers from Islamic extremism. Polling stations were destroyed, and terrorist attacks prevented people living in these areas from exercising their right to vote.

In the absence of any legal provisions on or experience of managing disasters during an election period, it is crucial that election authorities have an election emergency management plan in place that covers everything from financial issues to the training of staff. Electoral bodies must also advocate for electoral legislation that can meet the needs that arise from natural disasters. In the specific case of the 2019 elections, the areas affected by cyclones Idai and Kenneth were also affected by terrorism, and political and military conflict. These areas were generally opposition party strongholds, particularly for RENAMO. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that these circumstances had a significant impact on the election results.

This case study analyses the effects of the natural disasters on the 2019 legislative, presidential and provincial elections in Mozambique, exploring all the stages of the electoral process from voter registration to campaigning and voting, and all the other aspects inherent to the process. It argues that the

government's decision not to postpone key stages of the electoral process despite the occurrence of the extreme weather events had an impact on election organization and citizen participation, and affected the results of the presidential election and the distribution of legislative and provincial seats.

BACKGROUND AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique enshrines multiparty democracy based on regular elections through universal, direct, secret and equal suffrage. The President of the Republic, the deputies in the Assembly of the Republic, the provincial governors and members of provincial assemblies, and mayors and members of the municipal assemblies are all elected for five-year terms. All citizens aged 18 or over on the date of the election are eligible to elect their representatives. The presidential elections follow a system of absolute majority, that is, a candidate must receive more than 50 per cent of the valid votes to be named President of the Republic. If no candidate receives this amount in the first round, a second round is held within 30 days of the date on which the results of the first round have been validated by the Constitutional Council. This round is contested by the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round of elections. The President of the Republic is limited to two consecutive five-year terms. In Mozambique, there has never been a need for a second round since the candidate from the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), the party that has been in power since the country gained independence in 1975, has always been elected in the first round.

Members of the Assembly of the Republic and the provincial assemblies are elected by a system of proportional representation, the closed party list system. For the legislative elections, 13 constituencies (11 administrative provinces as well as Maputo and Cidade) elect 248 deputies between them, and two constituencies in the diaspora (Africa and the rest of the world) elect one deputy each. These are elected by a simple majority.

The provincial and municipal elections use a system in which the voter elects a provincial governor and a member of the provincial assembly, or a mayor and a member of the municipal assembly, respectively, on a single ballot paper. The candidate who receives the most votes is automatically elected to each respective assembly. The candidate who receives the most votes for governor or mayor is also automatically elected. In the municipal elections, this method of electing a mayor was introduced in 2018 in a change from the system that had been in place since municipal elections began in 1998, when the two entities were elected on separate ballot papers.

These changes to the way municipal bodies are elected and the introduction of the principle of electing the provincial governor were formalized in 2018.¹ This was linked to the signing of a final peace agreement between President

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¹ Law No. 1/2018, *Boletim da República*, Series I/115, 12 June 2018.

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Filipe Jacinto Nyusi and RENAMO leader Ossufo Momade in August 2019 (Vines 2019), which contained details on the demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration of all remaining RENAMO soldiers (Kingma 2020) and decentralization reforms. Previously, accusations of bias in the operation of the electoral management bodies (EMBs) had led RENAMO to break the political settlement (Khan 2018) signed in Rome in 1992, beginning a second civil war (Darch 2016), and to refuse to participate in the 2013 municipal elections, demanding the inclusion of its members at all levels of the EMBs (Rocha 2013). Talks took place between the government and RENAMO with the mediation of national and international partners. After 70 rounds of negotiations supported by national and international mediators (Vines 2019), amendments to the main electoral legislation were passed, and parliament approved a new National Electoral Commission law (O País 2014a).

The National Electoral Commission (Comissão Nacional de Eleições, CNE) is an independent body that regulates election procedures, with members from political parties and civil society organizations. It has 17 members: 5 appointed by FRELIMO, 4 by RENAMO and 1 by the Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (Mozambique Democratic Movement, MDM), proportionate to their number of seats in parliament. The remaining seven members are nominated by legally established civil society organizations co-opted by the political parties.² The co-optation of CNE members from civil society organizations prevents this body from being able to remain impartial in its role (Bratton 1994).

Despite the parity between power and opposition defined as proportionality in parliamentary representatives and the inclusion of civil society in the EMBs, the composition of these bodies at the central level in the CNE and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral, STAE), and at the provincial and district levels in the Provincial Electoral Commission (Comissão Provincial de Eleições) and the District Electoral Commission (Comissão Distrital de Eleições) continued to be dominated by a majority of members with strong links to the ruling party. This gave FRELIMO control of the decision-making mechanisms at all levels. The 2014 electoral legislation reform made changes to the composition of polling station personnel, increasing the number from five to seven, with four hired in a public recruitment process and three appointed by the political parties with seats in parliament (FRELIMO, RENAMO and the MDM). Political party members are included in polling stations as a way to 'prevent electoral fraud' and make elections more transparent.

² Law No. 9/2014, *Boletim da República*, Series I/21, supplement, 12 March 2014. The constitution of the CNE followed an informal political settlement between RENAMO and FRELIMO leaders reached during the 2014 negotiation process. Under the terms of the agreement, the three parliamentary benches would confirm the three civil society members who were elected by FRELIMO and who had already been part of the CNE since 2013. In return, the opposition would also choose its 'civil society' representatives with the support of FRELIMO's majority vote.

NATURAL HAZARD CONTEXT

As noted above, the 2019 presidential, legislative and provincial elections were disrupted by extreme weather events. Category 4 tropical Cyclone Idai hit the provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia on 14 March 2019, causing strong winds and heavy rain. Its impact was particularly devastating as it came in three waves (Ministry of Health, INS and WHO 2019). In early March, a low pressure system caused flooding in the provinces of Tete and Zambezia; in mid-March, Cyclone Idai hit the port city of Beira; and on 16–17 March more than 200 mm of torrential rain fell in 24 hours, causing the Buzi, Pungwe and Save rivers to flood more than 3,000 hectares of crops and surrounding villages (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation 2019). Storm winds of more 220 km/hour ravaged some districts in the provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia, where some 2.7 million people live (National Institute of Statistics 2019), destroying roads, bridges and other important infrastructure. The effects of Cyclone Idai displaced more than 400,000 people, caused outbreaks of infectious diseases such as cholera, and exacerbated malaria in the area (Ministry of Health, INS and WHO 2019). Tropical Cyclone Idai also hit neighbouring Zimbabwe and Malawi, where it also affected election preparations. In Malawi, some registered voters living in evacuation camps lost their poll cards due to flooding, while candidates had difficulty conveying messages to their supporters living in these camps (Mapote 2019).

Cyclone Idai occurred two weeks before voter registration began. It had a considerable impact because approximately 3,200 classrooms were destroyed (INGC et al. 2019). Voter registration brigades usually operate from these classrooms, which also act as polling stations on election day. Access roads (UNICEF Mozambique 2019) and electricity supply infrastructure used for the biometric registration of voters and for vote counting, which takes place on the evening on election day, were also destroyed. Most notably, over 160,000 people forced to shelter in 164 collective, temporary accommodation centres (INGC et al. 2019) lost their identity documents, which are required to register to vote (SIC Notícias 2019).

Mozambique is one of the countries on the African continent most vulnerable to and affected by climate change. Cyclones are becoming increasingly frequent and more intense (Mozambican Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018; Eckstein, Hutflits and Wings 2018). In 2000, floods killed 800 people and displaced more than 100,000. In 2012, a cyclone of the same magnitude battered southern Mozambique, destroying social and economic infrastructure, especially in the city of Xai-Xai, the capital of Gaza province, which was completely engulfed by water from adjacent rivers. Two further cyclones with much less devastating effects occurred in the central and northern regions in 2013 and 2014, respectively. The floods caused by Cyclone Idai in March 2019 had the same effect on the district of Buzi in Sofala province. Satellite photographs taken the day after the cyclone showed a district completely submerged by water from the Indian Ocean (SIC Notícias 2019).

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While there were no specific detection and attribution studies for Idai and Kenneth, overall, there is high confidence that the rainfall associated with tropical cyclones is more intense because of global warming. However, there remain significant uncertainties about the impact of climate change on the numbers and strength of tropical cyclones per se.

—IPCC 2022: chapter 4, p.47

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The severity of Cyclone Idai elicited responses from every corner of society. After consulting with all those political parties with parliamentary representation, particularly RENAMO, the largest opposition party (Pereiro Lopes 2019), the Mozambican National Institute for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (INGD) and civil society organizations, the EMBs asked the government to postpone the start of voter registration for a minimum of 45 days in order to minimize the effects of the cyclone on this process (Canal de Moçambique 2019a). This was the first time that the electoral process had been affected by a natural disaster. The electoral law passed by parliament in 2014 contained no provisions on managing such situations at election time. In fact, the election authorities were also caught by surprise, and were unable to develop mechanisms and procedures to facilitate voting in the period between voter registration and the election itself.³

Postponement was required to allow the procurement of new equipment to cope with the effects of the cyclone, such as battery-powered computers and mobile equipment. It would also enable solar panels, generators and tents to be purchased, allowing registration teams to operate in places where schools had been destroyed, training for members of the registration teams to be resumed, and the electricity supply infrastructure and electoral structures to be repaired (STAE Zambézia 2019). The electoral bodies also wanted to strengthen mechanisms for promoting the now-suspended electoral civic education campaigns, in conjunction with the political parties, in the regions affected by the cyclone (CNE and STAE 2019b). According to the STAE, deployment of some 6,000 civic education agents across the country had only been completed in July but they were subsequently withdrawn during the campaign period to prevent incidents with party supporters (STAE Zambézia 2019).

³ In December 2018, as part of its 'Consolidation of Democracy in Mozambique' programme which was funded by the European Union and Austria, International IDEA presented its Electoral Risk Management System (ERM) Tool to the Mozambique CNE with a view to implementing it in Mozambique to respond to electoral risks, including natural disasters. At the time, still affected by disputes over the results of the municipal elections, the CNE decided not to go ahead with this new system, as adopting it would have required a certain degree of political consensus among the members of the institution. Making specific reference to the impacts of cyclones Idai and Kenneth, which happened after the ERM Tool was rejected by the CNE, International IDEA resubmitted the project to the new CNE in late 2021 and the CNE agreed in principle to implement the system in 2022. Coincidentally, in February 2022, Mozambique was affected by cyclones Ana and Batsirai.

A 'MINIMAL' POSTPONEMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS AT ALL COSTS

The voter registration law gives the Council of Ministers (or Cabinet) the prerogative to decide on the dates for voter registration. At its ordinary meeting on 26 March 2019, the Council decided to grant a postponement of just 15 days, pushing the voter registration period back to 15 April to 30 May (from 1 April to 15 May).⁴ According to the government, this 15-day postponement was justified by the fact that the rescue operation in the areas affected by the cyclone was in its final stages, and the search and rescue operations in the regions at greatest risk were also almost complete (Portal do Governo de Moçambique 2019a). Thus, some 7.3 million additional voters were to be registered to vote in Mozambique's elections in just six weeks, set against the devastating effects of a cyclone that had occurred just one month earlier (CNE and STAE 2019c).

The Government of Mozambique saw holding the 2019 presidential, legislative and provincial elections on the scheduled dates as imperative not only to support the discourse around election democracy in crises,⁵ but also to ensure the survival and legitimacy of a highly contested regime (Rosário and Guambe 2022). The decision by the Council of Ministers was interpreted by RENAMO as a politically motivated tactic by FRELIMO to prevent voters in RENAMO strongholds from registering—and not without cause (Rajá 2019). In countries with proportional electoral systems, and especially those with provincial-level constituencies, as is the case in Mozambique, the number of registered voters in each province is a determining factor when calculating how many seats each constituency will have in parliament.

At the same time, with help from its international cooperation partners—the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the European Union, the United States, Italy and the World Bank—the government was raising funds for post-Idai reconstruction. This assistance included support for disease prevention, food security and early warning systems in the communities affected by Cyclone Idai. Since no proposals for mitigating extreme weather-related risk in elections had been outlined when planning the election cycle, it also included funds to purchase new election equipment. Two weeks after it began, voter registration was running smoothly in the southern regions and the provinces not affected by Cyclone Idai, with the exception of some districts in the province of Cabo Delgado which had been affected by recent terrorism. In Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia, however, the provinces affected by Cyclone Idai, registration had not yet begun as there were still no solar panels or generators to run the computers and mobile equipment used for biometric

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⁴ Decree No. 79/2018: Establishes the period for the electoral census in districts without local authorities and abroad, and updates the census in districts with local authorities, *Boletim da República*, Series I/242, supplement, 12 December 2018.

⁵ In 2014, Afonso Dhlakama and Armando Guebuza signed a cessation of hostilities agreement to allow the general election to be held that year. After the elections, military conflict resumed in the central region. To enable the 2018 and 2019 elections, another peace agreement, said to be final, was signed between Filipe Nyusi, the leader of FRELIMO and President of Mozambique, and Ossufo Momade, the President of RENAMO.

registration (Breckenridge 2014). The situation deteriorated further with the advent of Cyclone Kenneth, which hit coastal regions in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula in April 2019 (UNICEF Mozambique 2019).

THE EFFECTS OF CYCLONE KENNETH ON VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE NORTH

Cyclone Kenneth further depleted the infrastructure set up for voter registration and destroyed election materials such as electoral registers, polling cards and printers, and the classrooms where voter registration teams were operating in these two provinces.

As noted above, after voter registration had begun, coastal regions in the northern provinces were affected by Category 4 tropical Cyclone Kenneth, which was accompanied by gusts of up to 215 km/hour, causing flooding in the districts of Ibo, Macomia, Matemo Island, Metuge and Quissanga (in Cabo Delgado), as well as Eráti, Memba and Nacala (in Nampula) (Miller 2019). As a result, about 85 per cent (45,382) of the houses in the districts of Macomia, Matemo Island, Metuge and Quissanga in Cabo Delgado were completely destroyed. Access to these districts was also affected due to the destruction of roads, bridges and the communications network, and significant damage to the power supply system.

This new cyclone displaced about 300,000 people (CNE and STAE 2019b) and caused 44 families to seek shelter at temporary accommodation centres in Memba (Portal do Governo de Moçambique 2019b). It was the first time that the country had been affected by two cyclones of the same magnitude in such a short period of time. Cyclone Kenneth further depleted the infrastructure set up for voter registration and destroyed election materials such as electoral registers, polling cards and printers, and the classrooms where voter registration teams were operating in these two provinces (STAE Nampula 2019). This had a considerable impact on voter registration in the region, which was also feeling the effects of terrorist violence carried out by the jihadist group Al Sunnah wa Jama'ah, which is linked to the Islamic State group (West 2018).

Given both the cyclone and the terrorism in the region, coupled with the government's refusal to postpone voter registration, a number of measures were taken by the election authorities to allow citizens to register and to vote.

MEASURES TAKEN TO ENABLE THE ELECTION(S) TO BE HELD: VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registration is a fundamental part of the electoral process, as it is a technical procedure by which individuals acquire electoral citizenship by being issued with a polling card (Schmitter 1997). In Mozambique, a new biometric census is carried out from scratch for each electoral cycle, which includes the municipal elections that take place one year before the presidential, legislative and provincial elections. In the year of the municipal elections, a census is conducted from scratch in all the cities and towns that constitute the

municipalities. In the following year, a census is carried out from scratch in the rest of the country and the municipal census is updated.⁶

The CNE and the STAE (the latter is legally subordinate to the former) are the sole institutions in charge of organizing voter registration, and compiling and managing the voter register. These institutions are supported in the field by stationary and mobile brigades. The electoral law allows mobile brigades to register voters within a radius of up to 5 km.⁷ To register, voters must present their identity card or passport. If they do not have either of these documents, their identity can be verified using another document, provided that it contains a recent photograph or fingerprint. Alternatively, two citizens registered with the same registration brigade as the prospective voter can verbally affirm for their identity.⁸ Each voter who successfully completes registration is issued with a polling card, which indicates that they are registered on the electoral roll for the constituency closest to their usual residence, and are therefore eligible to vote. From the second to the fifth day after the end of the registration phase, the registers are displayed in the same locations where voters registered, allowing them to check that the procedure has been carried out correctly and to correct any errors (Rosário and Muendane 2016).

As noted above, the Council of Ministers authorized the postponement of the voter registration period for just 15 days in the provinces affected by Cyclone Idai. When voter registration began 15 days later, however, impassable roads, power outages and damaged schools made it impossible to station brigades in the locations they had established previously. It was also difficult to register voters in the north of the country due to Cyclone Kenneth, which had destroyed voter registration materials, and damaged printers, cards, paper and other items, affecting the registration brigades in Nampula and Cabo Delgado and interrupting registration in those areas for 10 days. Some of the voters who had already registered lost their polling cards (Jones et al. 2020). Moreover, the actions of the insurgent groups in Cabo Delgado exacerbated these voter registration issues.

In the districts affected by terrorist attacks, the registration brigades' activities were limited by their dependency on escorts from the Defence and Security Forces, which were not always available. The chronic issues of computer or mobile equipment breakdowns that had always affected the two regions were made worse not only by the lack of electricity, but also by the inability of the EMBs to replenish registration materials (O País 2014b). These difficulties were linked to roads that remained impassable, delays in financial support to purchase the materials and attacks perpetrated by the military junta in the central regions and by the al-Shabaab group in the north.

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⁶ Law No. 8/2014 amending and republishing Law No. 5/2013 of 22 February establishing the legal framework for systematic voter registration for elections.

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The difficulties created by the cyclones and terrorism also affected the activities of political parties, especially those of the opposition during the campaign period.

In addition to not having any of the documents required by law for voter registration, the people displaced by the cyclones were new to the accommodation centres and therefore unknown to the local religious and community leaders who would have to vouch for their identity in the registration process. To allow more voters to register, the government called on the EMBs to ramp up civic education activities and strengthen financial, material and human resources in cyclone-affected provinces. A lot of money was spent rebuilding voter registration stations and restoring destroyed election infrastructure such as polling stations, but the EMB opted to extend each day of the registration period only by 90 minutes. This allowed more voters to register, but the target number of expected voters was not reached in these provinces. The target set for voter registration before the cyclones was all Mozambicans who would be aged 18 or over on the date of the election, and this was never readjusted.

Table 1 shows that the election authorities were unable to meet their targets due to the lack of financial resources, transport problems in the areas affected

Table 1. Number of voters targeted and actually registered by STAE

Provinces from south to north	Target number of voters for 2019 (I)	Voters actually registered in 2018 and 2019 (II)	Fulfilment of STAE targets (%) (III)
Cabo Delgado	1,302,322	1,185,024	90.99
Nampula	3,085,692	2,361,973	76.54
Zambezia	2,733,532	2,140,125	78.29
Tete	1,455,999	1,119,378	76.88
Manica	1,063,767	893,426	83.98
Sofala	1,286,737	1,028,374	79.92

Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of the 2018/2019 voter registration (Maputo: STAE, 2019).

by Cyclone Idai, and their inability to replace the voter registration materials destroyed by Cyclone Kenneth in the regions heavily affected by terrorism. The difficulties created by the cyclones and terrorism also affected the activities of political parties, especially those of the opposition during the campaign period.

CAMPAIGN PERIOD

In Mozambique, campaigning for the 2019 elections ran for 43 days (31 August to 12 October) and involved a number of parties in addition to the three with seats in parliament. All the parties conducted their campaigns door-to-door, while also using motorcades and rallies to try to convince the electorate to vote for their manifestos. The cyclones and terrorism were both central themes in the campaign. In their messages, the candidates and parties pledged to repair the infrastructure destroyed by the cyclones and combat the effects of climate change, which they argued is the main cause of the cyclones that are increasingly affecting the country (Sebastião 2019).

The opposition parties complained about the difficulties they faced running their campaigns in places where cyclone survivors and those fleeing terrorism had congregated:

It is very difficult for us in the opposition to run campaigns in the accommodation centres ... especially in places where they have been registering voters and where they are going to set up polling stations ... people are always in meetings organized by administration officials ... I think the food assistance is forcing people to be in meetings all the time.

(Jornal O Autarca 2019: 3)

Although also common in other electoral processes in the country, the use of state resources by candidates from the ruling party in the 2019 elections made it easier for them to overcome barriers to access to the innermost areas of the provinces affected by the cyclone and the terrorist attacks, notably Zambezia and Sofala (Jornal Txopela 2019).

At the local level, the ruling party, accompanied by the state military apparatus, was able to enter areas affected by the cyclones and the insurgency that were inaccessible to the opposition parties in order to promote its election campaign. In response, the opposition parties started rumours that 'FRELIMO created al-Shabaab' (Chichava 2020).

The destruction of sanitation facilities, the contamination of most sources of drinking water, the precariousness of conditions in communities housing families displaced by the insurgent attacks and other effects of the cyclones led to the spread of malaria (2,694 cases of malaria in Cabo Delgado continued to rise, with cumulative 2,694 malaria cases registered as of 8 May, with most cases being reported in Pemba (1,423) (Ministry of Health, INS and WHO

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2019)), as well as outbreaks of cholera in the districts of Macomia, Mecúfi and Mocímboa da Praia (DW 2019) in Cabo Delgado. This prevented door-to-door campaigning in these districts (ADS/Catholic Church 2019). The disease outbreak led people in these districts to boycott the ruling party's election campaign, accusing it of colluding with health workers to bring cholera to the communities, and to destroy the cholera treatment centres set up in the region (ADS/Catholic Church 2019). According to the health authorities, 109 cases of cholera were reported in Pemba (89) and in the districts of Mecúfi (10) and Metuge (10) on 8 May alone (Ministry of Health, INS and WHO 2019). To quell the unrest, about 50 people thought to be close to RENAMO who were spreading such false information were arrested (CDD/Catholic Church 2019a), but this provoked a wave of violence in Mecúfi. The joint CDD/Catholic Church election observation report states:

Local health authorities increased their awareness-raising activities among communities on the reasons behind the spread of cholera and preventive measures were taken to avoid cases of diarrhoeal diseases.

There was significant violence involving the police and RENAMO supporters... a crowd massed in front of the Mecúfi administration office demanding the release of people unjustly arrested by the police... they thought they were political arrests to prevent RENAMO members campaigning for their party... the police used and abused force to disperse the demonstrators. (CDD/Catholic Church 2019b)

The wave of violence in the district during this period created a climate of intimidation that may have led voters to stay away on election day. At the same time, local health authorities increased their awareness-raising activities among communities on the reasons behind the spread of cholera and preventive measures were taken to avoid cases of diarrhoeal diseases (DW 2019). Administration of the ShanChol vaccine against cholerae was expanded to other districts (Portal do Governo de Moçambique 2019c). Although there was localized violence in the last few days of the campaign period, election day itself went satisfactorily.

ELECTION DAY

Despite the terrorist activity, which had begun in 2017, and cyclones Idai and Kenneth, which occurred at the beginning of the voter registration period, the election authorities had failed to develop a crisis management procedure or to design specific voting processes for the people located in the accommodation centres set up to shelter potential voters. Using the help from the government, they were more concerned about finding safe places to house cyclone survivors. However, most of the accommodation centres were set up to house people in their original constituencies, so the electoral results and the political composition of the constituencies were not significantly affected.

Other previously identified polling stations where voters had been registered were moved to places where all the displaced persons could exercise their right to vote. With the help of cooperation partners such as the EU and the

Austrian Development Cooperation, through a programme to support the consolidation of democracy in Mozambique implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) as well as budget booster funds, tents (CNE and STAE 2019a) were procured by the local election authorities to be used as polling stations (Sala da Paz 2019; EISA 2019a). These new stations were not always located close to the displaced persons' new residences, however, which made it difficult for them to exercise their right to vote. It should be noted that in Mozambique, under normal conditions (excluding exceptional cases), voters exercise their right to vote in the place where they are registered to vote, but this was not the case for some of the people who were affected by cyclones Idai and Kenneth.

Even with an increased election budget for the procurement of tents, there was no guarantee that potential voters facing the issues of flooding, terrorism and cholera, especially in the Cabo Delgado region, would exercise their right to vote or remain in the accommodation centres. Already during voter registration, for instance, 5,000 people in the district of Mecúfi had refused to register, citing a lack of support from the provincial government to resettle them in safe places near urban centres or in relatives' homes, and the precarious nature of the temporary accommodation centres (Sala da Paz 2019; EISA 2019b).

As the effects of the cyclones eased, especially in regions in central Mozambique affected by Cyclone Idai, people tended to return to their places of origin. Managing the displacement of those affected by the cyclones exposed the election authorities, which had neither a budget nor a contingency plan for unforeseen circumstances (CNE and STAE 2019b). The initial election budget of EUR 95 million was already insufficient to ensure that voting could take place without any major issues. The impacts of cyclones Idai and Kenneth led the election authorities to call for an additional EUR 211 million (O País 2019) to implement an inclusive election process. At the time, the President of the CNE acknowledged in a private meeting with the national election observation missions that the elections would be held at the level possible, in line with what could be achieved (CNE 2019). In fact, training for the approximately 144,000 polling staff, which is carried out by the election authorities during each election process, went as smoothly as possible given the financial and cyclone-related constraints.

With the CNE limited in terms of financial capacity, supervision was not necessarily effective, and it was not possible to organize training for election staff that was adapted to the situation caused by the dual disasters. There are no reliable data on the number of people who did not exercise their right to vote as a direct result of the effects of cyclones Idai and Kenneth. The abstention rate in the elections was 48.16 per cent.

Despite the displacement of people and destruction of infrastructure by the cyclones in Cabo Delgado, Manica, Nampula, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia provinces, Table 2 shows that voter turnout was not lower than the previous election. Voter turnout in general elections has been on the increase since the 2009 elections, and from 2014 to 2019 there was a 3 per cent increase

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Table 2. Participation rate by province

Provinces affected by cyclones Idai and Kenneth	Abstention rate (%)	
	2014	2019
Cabo Delgado	50.47	50.84
Manica	54.00	39.28
Nampula	59.49	57.84
Sofala	49.61	42.39
Tete	45.36	40.43
Zambezia	59.77	57.66

Source: Constitutional Council, Ruling No. 21/CC/2014; Ruling No. 25/CC/2019.

At a time when the public authorities had no plan to deal with the violence perpetrated by the insurgents, the cyclones added to the difficulties of managing the elections.

at national level (International IDEA n.d.). Many provinces throughout Mozambique reflected that trend to varying degrees, acknowledging that voter turnout dynamics at provincial level may be affected by many different factors, from economic grievances or satisfaction, electoral violence and intimidation or their absence, localized fraud, armed conflict or natural disasters, perception of candidates and so on.

Attempts by the election authorities with help from the INGD to adjust implementation plans—especially for election day—by setting up new polling stations in places not prone to flooding did not produce tangible results by persuading displaced populations to participate effectively. On the contrary, these populations totally distanced themselves from an election held in highly complex conditions, as a result of both the cyclones and the terrorist attacks (Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira 2019). At a time when the public authorities had no plan to deal with the violence perpetrated by the insurgents, the cyclones added to the difficulties of managing the elections. Local election authorities were unable to come up with alternatives other than closing certain polling stations in Napire and Iphuho (Meluco) and three others in Banga Velha, Nacate and Ntapuala, all in Cabo Delgado province (Jones et al. 2020). In this context, space was created for election manipulation, as noted above, through the distribution of the voter registration brigades and the management of election materials in ways that favoured the ruling party, which controls the EMBs.

ELECTION OBSERVATION

The 2019 elections were monitored by various national and international election observation missions. Among the international missions included were those of the African Union, the EU, the Southern African Development Community, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the Commonwealth and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. Among the domestic observers, three platforms should be highlighted: Sala da Paz, led by the Institute for Multiparty Democracy; the JOINT platform; and the Plataforma de Transparência Eleitoral (electoral transparency platform) led by EISA (Jones et al. 2020). Some 537 international observers and over 42,000 domestic observers were approved to observe on election day at 20,590 polling stations (Constitutional Council 2019). However, national observation faced the issue of accreditation.

Due to obstacles created by the EMBs at the provincial level, about 3,000 of the 7,000 observers planned for the latter two platforms (Jones et al. 2020; EISA 2019c) failed to obtain credentials, while others were given their credentials the day before the vote or even on the day of the vote itself. These constraints prevented observers from getting to their polling stations on time, particularly in the provinces of Nampula, Tete and Zambezia, due to the inaccessibility of many of the regions severely affected by the cyclones. There were also political obstacles, such as the murder of an election observer one day before the vote (Rodrigues 2019) and the arrest of 18 young people belonging to a small political party, Nova Democracia, created in the days leading up to the elections. These young people remained incarcerated for more than a month, accused of falsifying their credentials (Mapote 2019).

Overall, however, while acknowledging the existence of numerous electoral irregularities and incidents, the international election observation missions concluded that these were not sufficient to render the electoral process unviable (European Union 2019). The EU Mission was the most critical of all. Its report presented a number of incidents, primarily perpetrated by members and supporters of the ruling party, involving factors such as the use of state property and police aggression (European Union 2019). The election observation difficulties faced in the regions affected by cyclones Idai and Kenneth were also acknowledged. In addition, no communication mechanisms were put in place to notify voters that their polling stations had been moved. Access difficulties caused by the cyclones and the insurgency may have contributed to the lack of information provided in the observation mission reports.

At the same time, the crisis caused by the cyclones made it easier to manipulate results in places that could not be accessed by election observers, such as the provinces of Nampula and Zambezia. It was partly through this window of opportunity that the results significantly favoured the ruling party in places that have traditionally been dominated by the opposition parties (Jones et al. 2020). The absence of election observers meant that many polling stations were fertile ground for results to be engineered and to go uncontested,

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even more so because many voters had been unable to identify their new polling stations because the changes had not been well publicized.

INFORMATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The spread of information on social media, however, also meant that there was a risk of unreliable information being shared with the potential to incite al violence.

The increased use of digital communications platforms meant that the 2019 electoral cycle saw a level of information circulating not seen in previous elections. The monitoring of elections meant that election incidents, fraudulent actions and other events that occurred during the electoral process were reported, sometimes in real time. The Txeka platform run by a local civil society group, Olho do Cidadão, enabled local observers to report irregularities and violent incidents on digital platforms in real time. In addition, a study of the main social networks—Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube—found that these platforms were important not only because information was shared on them, but also because they reported on the main issues that might threaten the process (Jones et al. 2020). Traditional media are generally censored (Jones et al. 2020), but situations such as an increase in the number of voters registered in Gaza province, the arrest of the 18 election observers from the Nova Democracia party, the difficulties accessing some locations as a result of the flooding caused by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, and the actions of insurgents were all reported and shared through social media.

Disinformation was a clear strategy adopted by political actors directly involved in the election process.

The spread of information on social media, however, also meant that there was a risk of unreliable information being shared with the potential to incite electoral violence. Such was the case, for example, when some election observation platforms spread information about the election results on the day after the vote but before any official announcement had been made. Some civil society organizations, such as MISA Mozambique, a media-oriented organization, monitored for disinformation during the voting process, which involved real-time fact checking of information suspected of being disinformation (MISA Mozambique 2019). Disinformation was a clear strategy adopted by political actors directly involved in the election process (Jones et al. 2020). For example, there was falsification of election results in some regions where results were expected to be more favourable to the opposition, such as Nampula, Tete and Zambezia, especially where national observers were not that present (CIP 2019b). With no risk management structure for tackling such disinformation campaigns, the EMBs called a number of press conferences to refute each rumour as it spread.

COST OF ELECTIONS

The financial crisis that affected—and continues to affect—the country meant that the 2019 election process always faced a considerable budget deficit, which was exacerbated by the cyclones. Early on in the process, the electoral bodies announced that they were facing constraints on more than half of

the budget. As noted above, the election authorities announced that EUR 95 million—44 per cent of the planned budget, as allocated in the general state budget—had been used to cover the first phase of the electoral process, and the total amount needed to organize the electoral process following the cyclones was EUR 211 million. This represented an increase of seven times the total spent on organizing the 2014 election process (CIP 2019c), which was about EUR 30 million.

The provinces of Manica, Sofala and Zambezia, which were hit by Cyclone Idai, and Cabo Delgado and Nampula, which were hit by Cyclone Kenneth, increased their initial budgets by over MZN 50 million (EUR 690,000). Most of the additional funds were allocated to repairing election infrastructure, procuring tents and renting vehicles to transport election materials to places with limited access (STAE Zambezia 2019). The Government of Mozambique used its disaster management fund (Fundo de Gestão de Calamidades) to mobilize support, especially for displaced people in the transit and accommodation centres. In the end, USD 880 million from the natural gas exploration projects under way in Cabo Delgado province, led by Occidental Petroleum and Total, was used not only to fund the deficit (O País 2019), but also to part-fund the election campaign of FRELIMO's presidential candidate, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi (Verdade 2019). It is not known exactly how much was added to combat the issues that arose from the cyclones (CNE and STAE 2019b) but Nyusi is on record as stating that Mozambique borrowed the equivalent of USD 97 million to fund the elections, which the country would repay from its anticipated oil revenues (EISA 2020).

ELECTION RESULTS

On 29 October 2019, the CNE submitted the election results, and the centralization and tabulation decrees to the Constitutional Council for approval before publishing in the national *Gazeta*. The Constitutional Council officially announced the results on 22 December 2019, almost two months after the elections were held. The results gave a resounding victory in the first round to FRELIMO and Nyusi, with about 71 per cent and 73 per cent of the votes, respectively. Voter turnout was around 51 per cent of the 13,162,321 registered voters nationwide and in the diaspora (Constitutional Council 2019). In the provincial elections, FRELIMO also emerged victorious in all provinces without exception, including in provinces such as Nampula, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia where RENAMO had nearly always received a majority of votes in the past (Rosário, Guambe and Salema 2020). An in-depth analysis of the results showed that FRELIMO had received the most votes in all 161 districts of Mozambique, which had never happened before.

The FRELIMO received over 60 per cent of the votes in all provinces, and in Gaza it secured about 95 per cent. Even if there is no direct or obvious causal relationship between the effects of cyclones Idai and Kenneth and the strong election results for the ruling party, it is reasonable to believe that the

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limitations imposed by the effects of these disasters created space for the ruling party to use state resources to put itself in a better position than its competitors. The effects of the cyclones limited the political campaigning of the opposition and hampered voter registration in the areas traditionally under their influence. The cyclones undoubtedly benefited the ruling party and had a direct impact on electoral performance, in particular of the opposition parties. After the official election results were published, RENAMO and the MDM rejected them and called for the process to be rerun on the grounds that the vote had been marred by ballot stuffing in favour of FRELIMO, violence against opposition candidates, an increase in the number of pre-marked ballots, the barring of election observers and the grooming of polling station officials (RFI 2019; EISA 2019d).

CONCLUSIONS

The 2019 elections in Mozambique were preceded by two cyclones that directly and significantly affected the electoral process in the central and northern regions (see Table 3). In addition to the cyclones, terrorist attacks which began in 2017 had a negative impact on voter registration and voting processes. In the absence of specific legislation on how to proceed in the event of a natural or human-induced disaster, the public authorities did little to alter their activities with respect to how the electoral process should be organized. The only concern was to get people to safe areas. However, redesigned procedures were needed to preserve the right to vote for displaced populations in specific conditions and according to their situation.

Even though the northern regions of the country had been subject to terrorist attacks since 2017, the election authorities were unable to design or develop a crisis management procedure for terrorist-related incidents and events, and adopt it during voter registration, the campaign period or voting. In the absence of any such tools, the ruling party, which controls the state media and the public media, used the campaign to promote itself both in hard-to-reach areas and in areas affected by the insurgency, to the detriment of the opposition parties. In addition, the cyclones and insurgency excluded much of the population from exercising their right to choose their representatives. The lack of any plan and the imbalance in the means for promoting political parties' election campaigns helped FRELIMO to obtain a high number of votes in these regions and expand its dominance in an area that until then had been dominated by opposition parties.

Mozambique held elections in the context of extreme weather events for the first time. Many activities were left incomplete due to the lack of a legal framework adapted to this type of emergency. The main lessons that can be learned from this process and the key findings are set out below.

Main findings/lessons learned

- Mozambique is a country that is vulnerable to climate change. In 2019 this affected the organization of its elections. There is a need to provide the EMBs with the capacity for disaster response planning and an emergency fund to mitigate the effects of disasters on elections.
- There is a need to build in resilience and adapt elections infrastructure, schools and access roads to natural disasters. Most of the budget requested by the electoral bodies in the regions heavily affected by the cyclones was used to rebuild facilities, repair classrooms and buy tents.
- There is a need to design and maintain an elections risk and crisis management process that identifies potential risk areas from disasters

Table 3. The two cyclones during the elections

2018	
11 April	The date is set for the presidential, legislative and provincial elections
4 August	The electoral calendar is published and the date for voter registration is set
13 August	Receipt of candidacies for the municipal elections begins
2019	
14 March	Cyclone Idai hits the provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia
24 March	A request to postpone voter registration is submitted to the Council of Ministers
26 March	The Council of Ministers decides to postpone the start of voter registration and sets a new date
15 April	Voter registration begins
25 April	Cyclone Kenneth hits the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula
30 May	Voter registration ends
24 June	The distribution of mandates for each constituency is disclosed
31 August	Election campaigning begins
4 September	Pope Francis visits Mozambique
12 October	Election campaigning ends
15 October	Elections take place
23 December	The election results are validated
2020	
15 January	The new President of the Republic is inaugurated
30 March	A state of emergency is declared as a response to Covid-19

Source: Compiled by the author based on available information.

and political and military conflicts, and provides a budget to enable more effective responses to such incidents.

- There is a need for parliament to pass electoral legislation that helps the public and the electoral authorities respond to natural disasters more predictably at election time.
- Although the election process is biometric, Mozambique needs to solidify its voter registration infrastructure with permanent voter registers updated by civil registry offices. This re-engineering of the registration process would minimize the challenges faced in handling the distribution of materials and voter registration brigades in regions heavily dominated by the opposition, as well as those most affected by disasters or extreme weather events.
- There is a need to create mechanisms to improve the accreditation of election observers. A single credential issued at the beginning of the process and valid for all phases of the electoral cycle would minimize accreditation issues such as those experienced by independent observers during the 2019 elections, which were exacerbated by cyclone-related constraints and the resulting tight budget.
- In order to facilitate voting, whenever the election authorities change the locations of polling stations, they should communicate the new locations through all means available to them, but especially community radio, at least seven days in advance.
- Election stakeholders should commence a discussion on the introduction of special voting arrangements, which can increase voters' access to polls, especially in places that are vulnerable to the effects of disasters and severe weather events.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Domingos Manuel do Rosário holds a PhD in political science from Institute of Political Studies, University of Bordeaux. He is a senior lecturer at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Eduardo Mondlane University, and a senior researcher at the Centro de Estudos Urbanos de Moçambique (Ceurbe). He has written on decentralization, public policies in Mozambique, elections and electoral management bodies. He is currently researching on the new perspectives of the civil war in Mozambique and in the temporality of the vote by drawing on material repertoire, its biography and the respective mechanism of appropriateness and reinterpretation in Mozambique.

Contributors

Erik Asplund, Programme Officer, Electoral Processes Programme, International IDEA

Sarah Birch, Professor of Political Science and Director of Research (Department of Political Economy), Kings College London

Jeff Fischer currently serves as an independent consultant for election programming. He holds academic positions at Georgetown University and Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (Pisa)

Miguel de Brito is the Head of Mozambique Programme, International IDEA

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International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int