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Human Rights in Mozambique

Submitted by:

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report highlights key concerns related to **children's rights** in Mozambique, in particular **education¹, security², right to speak and be heard³, and general welfare⁴**. Each section includes recommendations to the Government of Mozambique.⁵

2. **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** is an international organization promoted by the Marist Brothers, present in 80 countries. FMSI has more than 15 years of experience working in the field of international solidarity, advocating for Children's Rights especially in the field of education. It works at the international level, participating in the UN Human Rights mechanisms in collaboration with other organizations with similar interests. It has been accredited by ECOSOC since 2011.

3. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from youth, teachers, educators, and other civil society actors living and working in Mozambique. All information concerned the period from June 2021 to August 2025.

II. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

4. Mozambique was reviewed in May 2021 at the 38th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This NGO welcomes the constructive participation of Mozambique in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). On this occasion, Mozambique received 266 recommendations and supported 236 recommendations while noting 30. We are pleased to see the adoption of many recommendations connected to the Sustainable Development Goals.⁶ The present joint submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2021.

5. This NGO thanks the Government of Mozambique for its efforts to adopt measures to safeguard Human Rights, as evidenced by the adoption of multiple recommendations. However, the full implementation of these recommendations is essential to ensure real progress. We therefore urge the government to allocate sufficient funding to the institutions responsible for

¹ The aim is to strengthen the country's education system, asking the State to take measures to this end. It is considered necessary for all young people in Mozambique to have access to the education system, as well as appropriate methodologies and materials. Improving teacher training also appears to be a relevant aspect.

² Efforts by the government to improve security in people's lives are acknowledged. Nevertheless, we believe that it is important to continue to insist on this aspect, which is essential for the improvement of the lives of the people of the country, especially in less populated areas and even around schools. We are concerned about the situations of violence that have occurred in recent months and how to take measures to ensure that they do not happen again.

³ Create mechanisms and spaces for meaningful, safe child participation in public policy and recovery efforts.

⁴ Our coalition also proposes several other important aspects for the development of the country and for safeguarding the rights of people, especially children, young people and the most vulnerable. These include access to basic services such as clean water, food, education and quality health care.

⁵ Children and young people are increasingly concerned about other issues that directly affect them and their families. Many aspects of human rights are interconnected so that when one fails, other rights are also threatened. Therefore, other concerns can be heard in the voices of children and young people that are less developed in this report.

⁶ SDG 3: Good health and well-being – 7% recommendations; SDG 4: Quality Education – 8% recommendations; SDG 5: Gender Equality – 16% recommendations; SDG 10: Reduced inequalities – 8% recommendations; SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions – 41% recommendations.

implementing them and to adopt consistent policy and practice that guarantee compliance with and improvement of the rights of the entire population, particularly the most vulnerable.

6. We thank the government of Mozambique for the opportunity to submit this report, as well as for its adherence to the measures proposed by the United Nations for the participation of civil society. At the same time, we are also aware of the need to further elaborate on the previous recommendations, as well as to address new ones that may arise at the next session.

7. This report, while attempting to respond to the last few years since the previous cycle, has been heavily influenced by the events following the 2024 general elections and the turmoil that followed. These events resulted in the tragic loss of life, the injury and trauma of minors, disruptions to educational access, and numerous reports of children being detained without adequate procedural safeguards. In this context, understanding the pressing rights-related needs of children has become not only a matter of national concern but a moral and legal obligation.

8. In the wake of the 2024 general elections in Mozambique, numerous reports emerged detailing the adverse impact of post-election violence on children and young people. Many were exposed to or directly affected by violence, school closures, arbitrary detention, and ongoing instability. These experiences not only disrupted their education and family life but also eroded their sense of safety, security, and belonging.

9. In this context, the voices of children must be heard with urgency and treated with the gravity they deserve. When the participating children were given the possibility to express their opinions on how to improve their lives in the field of rights Mozambican children offered clear, thoughtful, and realistic appeals, each grounded in the daily realities they confront and the rights they are entitled to under both the Constitution of Mozambique and international commitments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

III. METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION

10. An important part of this report has been carried out by listening to the direct voices of children, adolescents and young people, as well as adults directly involved in the lives of children and young people, involving several groups of students, aged between 15 and 16, from educational establishments. The total number of students involved was 20.

11. This report presents the reflections, discussions, and findings of the students regarding the rights of children, and human rights in general. Through classroom activities, group work, and community engagement, students explored key themes. The aim of this report is to raise awareness, promote advocacy, and encourage the fulfilment of children's rights in our school, local community and in the entire country at large.

12. In many of the themes, we highlight the coincidence in the opinions expressed by the children and the adults who accompanied them in the consultation and listening process. The main issues highlighted in this fieldwork are reflected in this report, although there were other concerns beyond those mentioned here.

13. Mozambique protects with laws and public policies the human rights. We are aware that some of the challenges facing the government are not easy to work on, so we appreciate the efforts to improve them, now and in the future.

IV. EDUCATION

14. We want to join the efforts of the State of Mozambique in the field of education. The adoption of several recommendations⁷ from the last UPR clearly shows the country's commitment to this topic. After actively listening to a group of adolescents and young people, we join their voices in recognizing the elements that have been improving in recent years, and we also invite the State to continue implementing policies that will improve the country's education system, and all that goes with it.

15. However, persistent gaps remain in equitable access and quality, particularly for vulnerable children (due to economic status, disability, or remoteness).

16. With the recent crisis, the right to education has been severely compromised by many. Children are asking for schools to be protected as safe zones, free from violence and political interference, and for the swift continuity of learning opportunities. Testimonies confirm that many children were prevented from attending school during and after the protests, leading to disrupted learning and anxiety about future opportunities.

17. In this way, the first of the conditions for enjoying the right to education comes to the fore. This is the possibility to go to school freely, without being afraid or having to stay at home because of what might happen to them on the way to school.

18. In order to improve the educational situation in the country, this NGO suggests the following recommendations:

- a. Guarantee universal access to free, quality primary and progressively free secondary education, without discrimination.**
- b. Ensure children can attend school daily without fear, including through safe-school protocols and protection measures.**
- c. Expand scholarships and social protection to reduce economic barriers at all levels, including higher education.**
- d. Invest in teacher training, learning materials, and inclusive education for children with disabilities.**
- e. Ensure contingency plans for continuity of learning during crises.**

⁷ 149.178 Implement concrete measures to reform the education system (Sierra Leone);

149.179 Continue the efforts made to support the educational system and guarantee the right to education for all Mozambicans (Tunisia);

149.180 Continue to ensure full and comprehensive access to education for its entire population (Nicaragua)

149.181 Enhance efforts to expand quality education throughout the country so that children from rural areas have access to the same level and quality of education as their peers from city areas (Singapore);

149.182 Put in place significant measures to ensure universal access to education as a means to reduce poverty, social inequality and gender inequality, among others (Mauritius);

149.183 Continue efforts aimed at equal access to education and creating mechanisms to reduce the number of school dropouts (Georgia).

V. SECURITY

19. Public and domestic safety are prerequisites for the full enjoyment of rights. For this reason, this NGO calls on the Mozambique government to redouble its efforts in this regard. Despite some progress, we are aware of the recent unstable situation in the country, and understand the difficulties in ensuring security, especially in and around the capital.

20. We are aware of the efforts and progress that the government has made in this area, but we believe that it is still not enough. This is also an issue where the population has to take sides, with more education in values. The international community can also help by offering resources and expertise to improve security.

21. Children continue to experience fear and uncertainty in their communities. They are calling for effective action to ensure public and domestic safety, and for law enforcement and military personnel to always respect and protect their dignity and wellbeing. *“I need to be with my family and not be taken away without them knowing”*.

22. The trauma of witnessing or experiencing violence has left deep psychological wounds. Children are calling for a stable and peaceful environment, one where reconciliation, unity, and dialogue are prioritized over conflict.

23. Multiple accounts have indicated that children were detained during the unrest, often without adequate legal safeguards or parental notification⁸. Children are urging authorities to halt these practices and instead implement juvenile justice procedures that prioritize rehabilitation and child protection.⁹

24. This heartfelt plea reflects the desire for a stable and peaceful environment, a necessary foundation for the realization of all other rights. It underscores children’s intuitive grasp of the relationship between political violence and personal wellbeing.

25. We consider it essential, in order to prevent violence and to act appropriately, to promote the further training of agents.¹⁰ This enhanced training should include the aspects most closely linked to the fundamental rights of individuals.

26. We also highlight the demands of children and young people for schools to be safe spaces. Safety both inside schools and in the surrounding streets is raised as children emphasized the need for safer schools and safer school routes, in particular the importance to have a conducive learning environment where students and staff feel safe and protected.

⁸ 149.102 Enhance efforts to prevent and ensure prosecution for human rights violations by law enforcement personnel, including the excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment (Italy).

149.103 Consider the establishment of specialized services for children in conflict with the law, especially by aligning laws on arrest and custody of minors with the country’s obligations under international law (Malawi);

149.107 Reform the legal framework on the arrest and custody of minors, harmonizing it with the country’s obligations under international law (Zambia).

⁹ 149.104 Consider harmonizing the juvenile justice system with international standards (United Arab Emirates);

149.106 Fully implement the child justice system in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Kenya).

¹⁰ 149.94 Take necessary measures to improve professionalism in the police force by including human rights practices in training (Malawi).

27. To further improve people's security, we would like to make some recommendations to the Mozambique government:

- a. Prevent and respond to violence in homes, schools, and streets, with child-sensitive protocols.**
- b. End arrests and detention of children for protest-related activities; ensure prompt parental notification, legal assistance, and alternatives to detention.**
- c. Strengthen human-rights training, resources, and oversight for police and security forces; expand community-level protection, including in rural areas.**
- d. Investigate promptly any excessive use of force and ensure accountability.**

VI. RIGHT TO SPEAK AND BE HEARD

28. Children and young people in the country have the right to be heard, especially on issues that affect them directly. In the contributions submitted by the children themselves they express a strong desire for their views to be respected in public policymaking, humanitarian planning, and recovery efforts.

29. Unfortunately, children's voices are often overlooked in moments of national crisis, despite their acute awareness of the consequences. The children's wishes are clearly expressed when they are given a voice. A clear example can be found in the workshops developed for the preparation of this UPR report. *"I want to speak freely and be listened to, even if I'm just a child."*

30. The offer made by the young people themselves is very significant. *"These requests represent more than just needs—we are rights. We are offered with sincerity, shaped by hardship, and rooted in a universal desire for dignity, safety, learning, and inclusion. As rights-holders under Mozambican and international law, we [children] are entitled to protection, participation, and a life free from fear."*

31. They go on to say: *"We therefore urge the relevant authorities to engage with our voices respectfully and act upon our messages with transparency, urgency, and compassion. Incorporating children's perspectives into national recovery, peacebuilding, and development efforts is essential for creating a just, stable, and inclusive society"*.

32. To improve the right to speak and be heard in Mozambique, we make the following recommendations:

- a. Establish mechanisms for listening to children and young people, particularly on issues that concern them.**
- b. Create spaces where children can express themselves freely and train them in the culture of dialogue.**
- c. Include in educational plans actions that promote the active participation of children and young people. To improve health education, as well as health equipment and care for the environment.**

VII. GENERAL WELFARE¹¹

33. Many families have experienced displacement and/or a deterioration in living standards. Children call for tangible improvements in access to safe drinking water, adequate nutrition, sanitation, healthcare, and dignified shelter, the basic conditions for survival and healthy development. These needs have intensified in the wake of recent instability and economic hardship.¹²

34. Beyond schooling, children and young people ask for real opportunities to develop their talents and skills—in and outside of school—so that their potential can translate into personal autonomy and broader social and economic benefits for the country.

35. Children also underscored the importance of safe, reliable road infrastructure. They recognize ongoing government efforts and emphasize that improved construction, maintenance, and road-safety measures reduce travel times and prevent accidents that cause avoidable loss and long-term harm to families.

36. Environmental protection and climate resilience are consistent concerns among children and youth, given the visible impacts on livelihoods, health, and displacement. While acknowledging the complexity of those challenges, we encourage continued adoption and implementation of effective adaptation, mitigation, and disaster-risk-reduction measures.

37. **We recommend the following recommendations to the Mozambique government:**

- a. Expand access to basic services and social protection, prioritizing vulnerable and displaced families.**
- b. Support returns or durable solutions for displaced persons, ensuring access to services and livelihoods.**
- c. Provide skills-development programs for youth in schools and communities.**
- d. Continue to improve road safety and infrastructure.**
- e. Implement climate adaptation and disaster-risk reduction measures; strengthen environmental education.**
- f. Increase school-based health services and referrals; expand training and equipment for health workers.**

¹¹ In this final section, we highlight cross-cutting priorities that repeatedly emerged from consultations with children, young people, and adults, and that are essential to improving daily life in Mozambique.

¹² 149.164 Take measures to improve the quality of and access to primary health-care services in rural areas and to ensure the availability of qualified health personnel (Serbia);

149.166 Prioritize measures to improve access to and the quality of primary health-care services, in particular in rural areas, and ensure the availability of qualified health-care personnel (Sudan);

149.171 Strengthen efforts to improve access to health care for all, including access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and information (Fiji);

149.177 Prioritize measures to improve access to quality primary health care, including sexual reproductive health services, to women, children and rural communities (South Africa).

VIII. DIRECT VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

38. We would like to bring to this report, albeit briefly, some direct voices of children and young people when talking about the situation of rights in Mozambique. These voices reaffirm the theoretical work that has been carried out by presenting the report, the result of interaction and listening to children, adolescents and young people, as well as groups of adults directly related to the lives of minors. We understand that they are the future of the country, and we know that they will be responsible for their own future.

39. For this reason, with the consultation work, we also wanted to work on the participation and protagonism of children and young people, giving them a direct voice in the draft of the report. From this desire, the "between quotes" of the report, and the contributions explained below, arise.

40. Education:

- *"Help us go back to school and stay there without being afraid."*
- *"I want to go to school every day without fear of being hurt or stopped."*

41. Security:

- *"I need to feel safe when I go to school or walk in my neighborhood"*
- *"I need clean water, food, and a place to sleep where I'm not afraid."*
- *"I want adults to stop fighting so we can live in peace."*
- *"Stop arresting children and treat us with respect, even if we are young."*
- *"Please stop the fighting and help our families live in peace."*
- *"Please make sure we are safe in our homes, schools, and streets."*

42. Right to speak and be heard:

- *"Listen to us when we speak about our problems—we know what we need."*

43. General welfare:

- *"Give us clean water, food, and a place to live where we can grow up healthy."*

IX. CONCLUSION

44. We sincerely appreciate the efforts made by the government to improve the standard of living of people in the country through the adoption of human rights mechanisms and instruments. This appreciation is particularly evident in the areas of education and health. Despite this, we continue to encourage further development in both areas by allocating a larger budget line and creating and supporting especial programs.

45. In its May 2021 National Report for the previous UPR cycle, the Government of Mozambique outlined measures—particularly in education, health, and living standards—which we welcome in principle. We also recognize the challenges the country has faced in recent years and the stated efforts to implement "supported" recommendations. At the same time, we report that poverty levels remain high and, in some areas, have worsened compared to previous years; that access to quality education and health services is uneven; and that perceived political affiliation may influence access to opportunities and public services, raising concerns about non-discrimination and equal treatment. Civil society actors have further alleged incidents of intimidation and violence against individuals who publicly criticize the authorities, contributing to a climate of

fear and self-censorship. In light of these concerns, we encourage the Government to deepen and transparently monitor reforms in education, health, and social protection; to ensure equitable access to services without discrimination; and to safeguard civic space by preventing and investigating attacks or reprisals against those exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

46. We thank the government of Mozambique for its efforts to continue to listen to the voices of civil society, especially children and young people, and encourage it to continue to make its best efforts to improve the situation of rights in the country in all areas.

47. We are also grateful for the opportunity offered by the United Nations to participate through the UPR mechanism. Special thanks for allowing us to raise the direct voices of the children and young people with whom we have worked, reflected on and drafted the report we conclude here.